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# FIRST THINGS:

A

## Series of Lectures

ON THE

GREAT FACTS AND MORAL LESSONS

FIRST REVEALED TO MANKIND

BY  
GARDINER SPRING, D.D.

PASTOR OF BRICK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

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## CONTENTS OF VOLUME II.

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### CHAPTER XIV.

|                            |           |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| THE FIRST DEIST, . . . . . | PAGE<br>5 |
|----------------------------|-----------|

### CHAPTER XV.

|                                                  |    |
|--------------------------------------------------|----|
| THE FIRST ACT OF DISCRIMINATING GRACE, . . . . . | 33 |
|--------------------------------------------------|----|

### CHAPTER XVI.

|                              |    |
|------------------------------|----|
| THE FIRST QUARREL, . . . . . | 54 |
|------------------------------|----|

### CHAPTER XVII.

|                            |    |
|----------------------------|----|
| THE FIRST DEATH, . . . . . | 78 |
|----------------------------|----|

### CHAPTER XVIII.

|                                               |     |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----|
| THE FIRST EXAMPLE OF EMINENT PIETY, . . . . . | 103 |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----|

### CHAPTER XIX.

|                                                     |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----|
| THE FIRST DEFINITION OF HUMAN SINFULNESS, . . . . . | 139 |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----|

### CHAPTER XX.

|                                                           |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| THE FIRST ANNOUNCED WITHDRAWMENT OF THE SPIRIT, . . . . . | 166 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----|

### CHAPTER XXI.

|                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| THE FIRST NATIONAL CURSE, . . . . . | 188 |
|-------------------------------------|-----|

## CHAPTER XXII.

|                                                         | PAGE |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------|
| THE FIRST YOUTHFUL PATRIARCH GOING FROM HOME, . . . . . | 228  |

## CHAPTER XXIII.

|                                                                              |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| THE FIRST INSTANCE OF WRESTLING WITH THE ANGEL OF<br>THE COVENANT, . . . . . | 252 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|

## CHAPTER XXIV.

|                                               |     |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----|
| THE FIRST REBUKE OF A DYING FATHER, . . . . . | 277 |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----|

## CHAPTER XXV.

|                                                           |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| THE FIRST REBELLION IN THE HEBREW COMMONWEALTH, . . . . . | 309 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----|

|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| CONCLUSION, . . . . . | 381 |
|-----------------------|-----|



## FIRST THINGS.

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### CHAPTER XIV.

#### The First Beast.

In the history of our first parents, the *first birth* must have been an event of deep interest. What mother, from the days of Eve to the present hour, ever realized such an event without those commingled emotions of solicitude, tenderness, responsibility, and joy, which none but the heart of a parent knows? Cain and Abel, it has been generally believed, were twin brothers. Two flowers there were that thus early bloomed on this barren earth, though the flowers of Eden were thus blighted. The "mother of all living" looked upon her first-born, and exclaimed in transports of gladness, "I have gotten a man from the Lord!" There was nature in all this; and was there not faith in it also? God had said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head,

and thou shalt bruise his heel." This promise of the Messiah was not given to a reprobate. Our first parents were to be the founders of true religion in the very world upon which they had brought the curse of their apostasy; and this simple and childlike exclamation of Eve, while it evinces her gratitude and a sweet sense of her dependence, shows that she was no castaway. Nor is it at all improbable, that these few words contained the germ of a stronger faith, and that she had the secret hope that her first-born son was the promised "seed of the woman."

It is an interesting fact, that God was not pleased to give our first parents posterity, until he had revealed this gracious promise; and it is a delightful truth, in its relations to those who die in infancy, that no child of Adam was ever born, except under the mediatorial reign of the promised Saviour. Cain and Abel began their existence under the announced reign of this Prince of Peace; yet, as they commenced it under a broken covenant, they inherited the character, not of their unfallen, nor of their restored parents, but the character which they possessed as fallen and depraved creatures.

We know little of the early history of these two first-born of the human family; the brief hints furnished by the sacred historian, show that they were very different men. It is obvious from the

whole narrative that they were religiously educated, and that they employed their religious training to very different ends. Their parents were acquainted with God, and had cultivated the most delightful intimacy with him before they fell. They were unhappily too well acquainted with the snares of the tempter ; and God had graciously made them acquainted with the way of salvation by his Son, and with the only way of worshipping him acceptably and with godly fear. These great truths they could not but have instilled into the minds of their children, by example, instruction, and prayer.

Religious instruction, even where most faithfully imparted, exerts a widely different influence upon different minds. This difference was strongly marked in the character of Cain and Abel. Abel was a pious young man ; Cain was ungodly. Abel was a believer in God's truth ; Cain was an unbeliever. Abel was a Christian ; Cain a Deist. Abel died an unnatural, yet a happy death ; Cain lived to wander a vagabond in the earth, and died none can tell where, with this only epitaph upon his grave, "That wicked one, who slew his brother." Nor was this first-born of the human family the last one of the race whose entrance into the world was greeted with exultation, but whose subsequent character and conduct overwhelmed

his parents with the bitterness, the very anguish of grief.

We have said that Cain was a *Deist*, and that Abel was a *Christian*. Truth and error, Deism and Christianity, have essentially their own peculiar characteristics in all ages of the world. The Christianity of Abel was essentially the Christianity of Paul ; while the Deism of Cain was essentially the Deism of Herbert, Blount, Shaftesbury, Tindal, Morgan, Chubb, and Bolingbroke. Christianity is the system of doctrines and precepts taught in the Holy Scriptures ; and the Christian is one who believes and loves these doctrines, and obeys these precepts. Deism is the system which, while it acknowledges the existence of one God, denies a supernatural revelation. It is the belief in natural religion only, or in those truths which are discovered only by the lights of reason and nature. The Deist is one who professes to follow these lights as his only guides. A cursory view of the character of Cain and Abel will justify the assertion, that while the former presents to us the first example of Deism, the latter furnishes us the first, among Adam's descendants, who was an exemplification of Christianity.

We rest these positions on a brief narrative which we extract from the fourth chapter of the book of Genesis. "Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in

process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire; and thou shalt rule over him. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against his brother Abel and slew him. And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel, thy brother? And he said, I know not; am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."

There is no such test of character as the revealed truth and will of God. They were revealed in order to influence the characters of men; while facts show that their characters are developed by nothing so certainly. Men are religious or irreligious, Christian or infidel, as they fall in, or fall out with God's truth and God's commands.

If we look into the Bible, we shall find that the *religious services* of men are there regarded as

unfailing indices of what they themselves are ; and the reason of this is, that their religious services are so intimately connected with their views of divine truth, and their affections toward it. That the offerings of Cain and Abel were widely different, and indicated a widely different character in the offerers, is obvious from the fact, that the one was an accepted, while the other was a disapproved and rejected service. We are not informed what these tokens of the divine approbation and disapprobation were ; it is not improbable that the offering of Cain was regarded with mortifying and stinging neglect ; while fire descended from heaven to consume the offering of Abel, and the smoke of it went up as a “sweet-smelling savor.” Whence this difference in the divine conduct toward these early worshippers ? A true answer to this inquiry will set the characters of these two men in their true light.

Here it is obvious to remark, that their offerings were presented with *a very different state of mind*. Both outwardly honored God. To the eye of man, both had the same object of worship, and both seemed to present an acceptable offering. If we cast our eyes over an assembly who come together for the worship of God, they all appear to possess the same religious character ; while, in the eye of Him who seeth not as man seeth, there are the broad and deep lines of distinction which

separate between his friends and his enemies. God requires and approves that which is holy. Though Abel was a sinner as well as Cain, there was something in his offering which God approved. This approbation was withheld from the offering of Cain, because it was destitute of holiness and a sinful sacrifice. God had no partiality for Abel, and no prejudice against Cain. He knew what was in the heart of both, and he treated both according to their character. The sacrifice of Abel was a sincere and honest sacrifice, and the true expression of a devout mind; the offering of Cain had the form of godliness, but was destitute of the power.

It was highly important to the best interests of our race, that, since this difference existed in their character, it should be clearly brought out; and that God should thus early read this lesson to the world, that he has no pleasure in a heartless religion. A religion of forms, be it ever so natural to the human heart, and ever so splendid and imposing, so long as it has nothing to do with the heart, is a religion which God abhors. It is a religion to which he foresaw the family of man would be greatly exposed; and he thus early raised his warning voice against it. And how affecting and memorable is the admonition! We here behold one who is at heart a murderer, and who turns out to be a murderer, having all the appearance

of a religious and devout man; making such an open avowal of his belief in the divine existence, and of his dependence upon him, that "he brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord." He was an infidel at heart, notwithstanding all this fair show of piety. And God thus publicly exposed his hypocrisy. He accepted the sacrifice of Abel, and with his sacrifice accepted also his person. While Cain was cast out of the divine family as a guilty and accursed man, Abel was adopted into it, and had the place and privileges of an adopted child. Cain found no access to God in this act of worship; there was everything in his own state of mind that was to the last degree forbidding to this delightful fellowship. Guilt created suspicion; suspicion, enmity; and enmity, persevering and irreclaimable alienation. Abel had every token of the divine favor, every hope and every promise; Cain had no such hope and no such promise, no such support in life or in death, no such holiness and heaven. His offering and his person were rejected of God. It struck him to the heart that God should make such a difference. He was the first-born, and it excited his jealousy that God should thus give the preference to the younger before the older; or that, in a religious service, he should have the preference at all. He was sad, his countenance fell, he was displeased and irritated, because God

thus rightfully gave the preference to his brother's offering. God claimed the heart of Abel, and Abel gave him his heart. God claimed also the heart of Cain; and though he had brought all the fruits of the earth and laid them on the altar, God would have said to him as he did to the Jews, in the days of the prophet, "Bring no more vain oblations." The religion of a Deist is like the religion of Cain.

The *subject matter* of their offerings was also essentially different. "Cain brought of the *fruits of the ground* an offering unto the Lord;" Abel brought "of the *firstlings of his flock*, and the fat thereof." The offering of Cain appears to the eye of human reason the more natural one of the two. And here was his error; he followed the leadings of his blinded reason. "The world by wisdom knew not God." The light of nature shows man that he has sinned, but does not show him how he may find mercy. God is holy, and cannot look on sin; man is sinful, vile to abjectness, and desperately wicked. Between reflections upon the character of God and the character of man, human reason sees no ground for hope. Man wants a religion, which God will accept; and would fain offer religious services that will be acceptable to God. This is a discovery which human reason cannot make; left to itself, its devotions are undevout; its worship, sin; its piety

impious ; its religion an outrage upon the divine rectitude.

The field of human invention in this article of man's relation to the Deity began to be very early explored ; nor did its discoveries differ widely from the rationalism and deism of subsequent ages. The savage of the desert satisfies himself with offering to God the fruits of his harvest-field ; the more enlightened rationalist of the present age satisfies himself with offerings which have no respect to Him, through whom alone there is access ; while the self-righteous religionist satisfies himself with going about to establish a righteousness of his own, by the deeds of the law. The veriest infidel is satisfied with such a religion. Human reason is never more at fault, than when it sets itself to invent for itself a religion. It is the mere religion of thought and intellect ; it has no solace for the conscience, and leaves the soul barren, and feeding on husks. It exerts no practical influence. It neither enlightens, nor converts, nor comforts, nor sanctifies. It is the merest delusion, if a man satisfy himself with such a religion. He may have sensibility and emotion, but they are not right emotions. They may rise to transcendental hopes, and romantic joys ; but they are mere excitement, and leave the soul under the dominion of sin. Men are now, and ever have been prone to devise their own systems of religious worship,

in opposition to the only acceptable worship which God has revealed in his word. There is nothing for which they more need the divine direction, and a special revelation from heaven, than to enable them to answer the inquiry, “ Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God ?” They must be instructed by heavenly love and wisdom ; else will their own ignorance, and error, and presumption, lead them farther from God in those very acts of religious worship by which they propose to draw nigh to him.

This instruction God condescended to give to Cain and Abel. The foundation of all acceptable worship was laid in the promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. Without this they had been without hope. God early taught them to draw nigh to him through the promised Saviour, and in the offering of *those sacrifices* which prefigured the Christian atonement.

The institution of sacrifices was as old as the introduction of sin ; the necessity of them is founded upon the fact that man is a sinner. “ Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission.” It is “ the blood that maketh atonement for the soul.” We find, that Adam and Eve, immediately after their apostasy, instead of remaining covered with their scanty protection of fig-leaves, were covered

with the skins of animals. Yet, at that period, the original grant for food was confined to the vegetable creation; the permission of it was not until after the flood. The inference is a natural one, if not unavoidable, that the skins with which they were clothed were those of animals which, by the divine appointment, were offered in sacrifice. This truth is strongly implied in the phraseology, that "*God made coats of skins and clothed them.*" It was not their own invention, nor their own work; they had no right, of their own will, to slay the lambs of the flock for this, or for any other purpose; it was of God's invention and God's appointment. God thus taught them that the foundation of their hope was not only in the promised seed of the woman, but in the *sacrifice* of that promised Saviour. The sacrifices he thus appointed shadowed forth to them the necessity and the reality of that one great sacrifice which took the place of all others, the blood of which possessed a higher value than the blood of bullocks and of goats.

This was their religion, and this the way in which they drew nigh to God. This was the religion which God taught them, and which they taught these two sons. And this is the only religion the Bible knows, and the only religion that meets the exigencies of men as sinners. Here there is a refuge for the guilty. Here is that victim whose blood

speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, and which has made all the reparation which the most excited conscience demands. The devices of men here disappear before the wisdom of God. Here are pardon, and holiness, and eternal life. A religion that does not accomplish this is no religion ; it is infidelity ; it is deism, which leaves the dark, unpardoned, uncomforted, depraved mind, still dark, and without God and hope.

This is the religion which Abel accepted and practised, and which was rejected by Cain ; and therefore, we say that the one was a *deist*, and the other was a *Christian*.

Behold in *Cain* the first deist which the world ever saw. It is a melancholy fact, that this first-born of man should have been a deist ; yet was he a worthy representative of those who reject the religion of Christ, and lean to their own understanding and the inventions of men. This is the distinguishing characteristic of all deists. Amid all the various phases which their systems exhibit, the one and main object of them all is to set aside the Christian revelation, and substitute natural religion, the religion of reason, the religion of Cain in its place. *Herbert* professes to believe in God, but regards the doctrines of Christianity as fables and dreams. *Blount* assails the doctrine of a Mediator as unworthy of God, and magnifies the oracles of reason. The Earl of *Shaftesbury*, with a

force and elegance of diction that might have been better employed, ridicules Christianity and extols the religion of paganism. *Tindal* professes a regard for Christianity, but a higher regard for reason and nature. This was deism, and this was the religion of Cain. He reasoned as the great mass of deistical and Unitarian writers have reasoned, in their rejection of that propitiation for sin which God has set forth. He professed to be a religious man; but he chose to worship God in his own way, guided by the lights of reason and nature, to the utter contempt of that worship revealed by God in his word.

Behold now in *Abel*, the first descendant of Adam who was a *Christian*. He believed the record which God had given of his son, in the first promise. We have an apostle's testimony for this, where he asserts, "By *faith* Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." He worshipped God, and made this early expression of his homage and devotement, by going to God in the name, and with a trusting confidence in the redemption of his Son. He offered the *firstlings of his flocks*. Reason and nature gave him no warrant to do this. It was a most unnatural offering; nor would the thought have once entered into his mind, nor would he have cherished it, had he not been instructed by God himself. Such a sacrifice could not have been acceptable, had it not

been of divine appointment. God himself has said, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." It were a vain sacrifice, if it had been an invention of his own; it was an accepted sacrifice, and the conclusion is irresistible that it was of divine appointment. He offered it "by faith;" and faith, we are told, "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." He was the first descendant of Adam, who, with his own hands, shed the blood of the innocent for the guilty, and thereby expressed his faith in him whose blood cleanseth from all sin. This gave his offering the preëminence. God's method of grace was thus early recorded, so that the truth might never be lost sight of that "there is no other name given under heaven among men," whether Jew or Gentile, whether in the early dawn of time, or in these last days, but the name of Jesus Christ. This godly young man thus found peace and pardon, and became prepared for his early, and sudden, and cruel death. The blow that severed him from earth, translated him to heaven. It was a dark hour that came upon him as he wandered in unsuspecting confidence with that deistical and murderous brother; it was an unlooked for cloud—a rushing tempest; but it bore him to his rest. So long as the names of Cain and Abel are remembered among men, will it be known that there is a difference between Christianity and Deism; and

that while the deist is a vagabond in the earth, and dies an exile from God's family ; the Christian is God's own child, and be the earthly house of his tabernacle gradually dissolved, or rudely torn down, he has a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

But the most important thought on this part of our subject, is the most familiar thought ; nor may I express it without somewhat more illustration than the hints just suggested. The Scriptures reveal two opposite states of mind in men toward themselves. There is a state of moral feeling which is expressive only of self-confidence ; it is a self-righteous and self-justifying spirit ; a spirit which leads them to hope for acceptance with God because they are not so bad as other men. It wearis itself by seeking to be justified before God by prayers, and offerings, and meritorious works and deeds of the law. Such was the spirit of the young ruler, whose boast was, "All these things have I done from my youth up; what lack I yet?" Such was the spirit of the Pharisee, who stood praying in the temple, when he ventured to appeal to his Maker and say, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men ;" and such was the spirit of the Pharisees generally, who "made their boast of honoring the law." Such was eminently the spirit of Saul of Tarsus, who "boasted in himself that he was righteous, and despised others." On the other hand,

there is a state of feeling which every right-hearted man has toward himself, which is the opposite of all this. God often speaks of this state of mind in his word, and of the necessity of possessing it, because, without it, no man feels his need of Jesus Christ as his Saviour. It was the spirit of the Psalmist, when he said, "I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be clear when thou speakest, and just when thou judgest." It was the spirit of the prodigal when he exclaimed, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." It was the spirit of the publican, when he smote upon his breast and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Such was the spirit of Abel. This is evinced by the fact, that his offering was made *in faith* in the "blood of sprinkling." Of all the Christian graces, the most confiding is the most humble. The grand sentiment of faith is that the sinner is ill-deserving, and that salvation is all of grace. A self-complacent, self-righteous, self-justifying faith in the Lamb of God as the propitiation for sin is as great an absurdity, as words can express. Sin makes the sinner vile, and justice sinks him low. The humility which godly men exercise consists in that *self-abasement* which sinks them as low as their iniquity abases them; which justifies the

condemning sentence of the divine law ; and which looks with hope only toward God's holy hill, where the appointed and bleeding victim pays the ransom, and where "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Without this spirit, God could not have accepted Abel's offering ; Abel himself would not have offered the lamb in sacrifice. Never could he have taken the knife to slay the innocent for the guilty, had he not possessed a true sense of his sins, and an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. *Cain*, on the other hand, had none of this spirit. He presented his offering of the fruits of the ground with all the self-complacency and self-righteousness of a man who felt that his good works and religious services gave him *a claim of right* to the divine acceptance. He had persuaded himself, notwithstanding a murderous heart throbbed within his bosom, that he had virtues, and merits, and a title to the divine favor, which it would be injustice to deny. He relied upon his supposed and assumed worthiness of the divine favor, to the contempt of that only method of mercy and acceptance which God had thus early appointed, through the merits of another. He had no true knowledge of his sin and guilt, and no sense of his need of mercy through the woman's seed, even though he himself was so vile. He had

not one self-abasing emotion. He knew not what it was to repent himself of his wickedness, humble himself before God, and seek his pardoning mercy. He put himself upon his rights, and God left him to maintain his rights as best he could. He put himself upon law and justice, and God tried him, and gave him law and justice. His offering was rejected. And when he saw that he was condemned, "his countenance fell." His wrath was kindled against God; his hands were full of blood. He turned away and persevered in his infidelity. The means of grace and salvation were still at his door; but he neglected them, abused them, despised them, and became "a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction." And such is the history of every man who ultimately rejects the salvation of the gospel. He that is not for Christ, is against him. There is no middle ground between believing and disbelieving; no half-way house between Christianity and infidelity.

We dwell on one more thought, before we draw the curtain on the history of these two young men. It is a question of interest, How came they thus to differ in their character and end? I speak not now of the grace that made the Christian differ from the Deist; of that I shall have to speak more largely in our next chapter. I speak of the means, the instrumental causes, the more remote agencies which exerted so powerful an influence.

It was not a difference in their religious education ; for they were both the children of the same parents, both beloved, and both enjoying the same religious example, instruction, and prayers. This great fact should ever be borne in mind, and it is among the *first things* which the early history of our race discloses, *that the same religious instruction often produces widely different results.*

When we consider the direful effects of the first apostasy, and what a wreck it has made of the heart of man, it is not unnatural to conclude that the truth of God should make impressions, for weal or for woe, on every mind to which it has access. It accords with the method of divine grace, that where it is received, it exerts a progressive influence ; while it accords with the intellectual and moral nature of fallen man, that where it is rejected, it gradually loses its force, and hardens the heart. While it becomes the natural aliment of one class of minds, and they live and grow upon it ; in the opposite class it excites hostility, provokes resistance, and awakens slumbering wickedness. Those there are who never grow so rapidly in sin, and become so precociously ripe for destruction, as when they become blighted in their youth, and their dry and fruitless branches are spread out under the dews and rains of heaven. Facts, from the days of Cain to the present hour, abundantly illustrate these observations. Truth

is a two-edged sword ; it always wounds. It is “a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one it is the savor of death unto death ; to the other the savor of life unto life.”

Cain was not an uninstructed man. Some of the most wonderful facts, and some of the most amazing truths, had been spread before his mind. He was the first-born of the race, and lived amid wonderful realities. A field of thought was presented to his view, which, if he had not trodden under his feet, would have yielded flowers and fruit ; to him it was a barren waste. And this is one of the reasons why, with all his religious instructions, he became a deist. He hated the truth of God.

He had also *a strong desire to get rid of moral obligation*. This is always one of the motives to infidelity. When men now read the Scriptures, and listen to a preached gospel, they feel the obligation to become Christians ; and they can think of no method by which they can so effectually weaken and destroy this sense of obligation, as by disbelieving what they read and hear. They try to disbelieve it ; and they often pretend to have brought their minds into this state of unbelief, because it emboldens them to cast off the sense of religious obligation. Men who hate to feel the obligations of true piety, are driven to this resort

for the sake of silencing their own consciences. Cain well knew the religion of his parents; but he was a bold free-thinker, and resolved not to be under any such bonds.

Nor is it at all improbable that he *prided himself upon his peculiar way of thinking*. It is quite likely that he set himself to oppose the religious views of Abel, and exerted his ingenuity in calling in question the reasonableness of the sacrifice offered by his believing brother. He took pleasure in contradicting the received religion of his family, in marking out a path for himself, and, instead of following in their steps, setting himself up as the great leader of infidelity.

Cain was moreover *a very wicked man*; and this was the true source of his deistical views. His subsequent conduct shows what he was; and in view of it, it is not unnatural to ask, how could such a man be anything else than a deist? “Light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their *deeds* are evil.” This is the cause of all the infidelity in the world. Wicked men, if they mean to remain wicked, will not become Christians.

We plead guilty to the charge of uttering no new truths in the present chapter; we do not plead guilty to the utterance of truths that are unimportant. *The great object of God's revelation is to disclose the method of acceptance with him.* The

fact is a solemn and affecting one, that men are sinners. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Angels found it so when they fell, and were thrust down in chains of darkness. Our first parents found it so, when they were doomed to wander in a world that was cursed for their sake, to go down to the grave, and to be righteously exposed to the wrath and curse of God. All have found it so who have lived and died in sin, and now have their abode in the world where "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Every man will find it so who does not seasonably admit the inquiry, "How shall I find acceptance with God? what hope is there for such a sinner? He may well take heed, in considering this question, how he confides in the traditions, or commandments of men, or to the delusions of the adversary, and his own wicked heart.

If some there be who say, there is no occasion for solicitude in respect to this matter; they may not be believed. It is an easy thing to be deceived with regard to one's own character. Men are sufficiently inclined to think well of themselves. Cain marvelled that he was not accepted. If there be those who flatter themselves that it is enough to reform their habits of outward sin, and be more attentive to the external duties of morality and religion; we have nothing to say against such reform and such seriousness; they are greatly

needed. But these give no answer to the great question, how shall I find acceptance with God? Cain did this, and yet was the vagabond of his race. Most seasonable are those counsels of heavenly wisdom which announce that one great sacrifice, and tells of him who is the only way, the new and living way. There is no holiness, no pardon, no peace, no heaven, where is no atoning Saviour. There is but this one foundation of hope. There is but this one gospel, and this one system of truth and duty. Nor is there any embarrassment on this great subject if men will go to the *word of God*. Abel, though dead, "yet speaketh," and shows the way of life.

Those who, like Cain, follow their own fancies in opposition to the instructions of heavenly wisdom; who devise a religion of their own in neglect of that which God has revealed; who trust in refuges of lies, and turn away from the only hope set before them in the gospel, show what is in their hearts, and that they possess a character which is unfitted for the kingdom of God. This was the test that brought out the true character of Abel and Cain; and it is equally decisive in its application to ourselves. Abel fell in with the method of redemption revealed, obscurely as it was, in that early age of the world; Cain fell out with it; and their course of conduct toward that great Sacrifice decided their character. We also

have the same test, more clearly revealed, and therefore more easily applied. A method of salvation has been disclosed to our fallen world which is the wonder of the universe. It is the wonder of God's wondrous government, that he can maintain his truth and justice, and yet pardon and save such creatures as his truth and justice condemn. God manifest in the flesh, Deity united with humanity—an atoning sacrifice by the death of the cross—salvation by that cross, through faith in the name of the great Sufferer,—these are the truths which are stumbling-blocks and foolishness to the men of the world; and to those who believe the wisdom of God and the power of God. Let every man ask himself how he is affected by them? what interest do they awaken in his bosom? what hopes does he build upon them? A true answer to these questions decides his character and destiny. If he revolts from these great truths and such a method of mercy as too humbling to human reason to be received, and still more humbling to the pride of his heart; and if he continues so to do, he puts himself beyond the reach of reform, and beyond the possibility of acceptance with God. He treads under his feet the blood of the Son of God, and in doing this he opposes and rejects that great goodness and mercy, that wondrous wisdom and glory of God manifested in the cross of his Son. No matter what else the sinner does, if he is hos-

tile to this method of mercy, he is lost. No matter how good, how moral, how religious he is, if he rejects this method of mercy, he is lost. His acceptance or his rejection of this method of mercy decides his goodness, his morality, his religion, his eternal destiny.

The dwellers in these Christian lands occupy a high eminence of privilege, in that from Sabbath to Sabbath, from one new moon to another, Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified in the midst of them. Wisdom hath killed her beasts, and mingled her wine, and prepared her supper, and sent forth her messengers to say, All things are ready. Beware of turning a deaf ear to these solicitations of redeeming love. Beware of the guilt of Cain, lest you be partakers of his spirit, bear his woes, and become an eternal exile from the presence of God. His guilty course was coming to its maturity, when he deliberately rejected the truth, that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission." Only to think of that state of mind in which a man regards himself as not needing an atonement! Do not thus trifle with this great Sacrifice. No, do this no longer. Relying on the help of Almighty grace, listen to the God of heaven and honor the sacrifice of his Son. If you say, "I am embarrassed; I know not what to do; I am in darkness; I cannot see my way clear;" then earnestly cry for

light. Only let your heart be toward your duty and your Saviour, and light will soon shine upon your path. You will come to him as you are, because the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was *lost*. You will come as you are, because he came not to call the righteous, but *sinners to repentance*. You will come as you are, because when we were without strength, Christ died for the *ungodly*. You will come as you are, and because you are poor, and miserable, and blind, and wretched and in want of all things, to be filled from his fulness, and be clothed upon with a righteousness that is not yours, but his who wrought and gives it; yes, he gives, freely gives it. It is all of grace, matchless, unmeasurable grace. You cannot purchase it, for it is above all price; the highest bidder for it will find that the greater Giver despairs a bribe. You cannot make yourself worthy of it, or in any way merit it, by waiting ever so long. The best deserve nothing but destruction. He gives it, and to those who see and feel that they have no righteousness of their own to plead; that they have nothing and are nothing; and that the most fitting qualification for receiving it, is a heart that gives him all the praise.

## CHAPTER XV.

### The First Art of Discriminating Grace.

God's truth is always the same. Moses was as staunch a believer in the doctrines of grace as Paul ; nay, Paul himself refers to Moses as himself inculcating the great doctrine of God's discriminating grace. There are those who would fain have us believe that there is no such thing. So the devil taught our credulous mother, when, with impudent and lying tongue, he uttered the words, "Thou shalt not surely die." There are those also who would have us carried away by the modern notion, that God saves all he is able to save ; and that if any are lost, it is because his almighty power cannot convert them. If this theory were true, instead of uttering the language, "I will have mercy upon whom I *will* have mercy," we should somewhere have heard him say, I will have mercy upon whom I *am able* to have mercy.

It is not the most popular theme, when we speak

of God's *discriminating grace*; yet it is very early brought to our consideration, and well deserves to be regarded as among the "first things" revealed by his Spirit.

Cain and Abel were brothers; the evidence from the sacred writings would seem to justify the conclusion, that they were *twin brothers*. Yet, how great was the difference in their characters! They were born with the same corrupt and totally depraved nature; they enjoyed the same parental solicitude, and the same religious nurture; yet the one was the confiding, the dutiful child of God, the other was a deist and a murderer. Whence this difference? and who made it?

They are some of the "deep things of God" to which these inquiries conduct us; but we have no sympathy with those who, in this time-serving age, deem them unprofitable things, and unfitting the pulpit or the press. We confess ourselves wearied with this dwarfish theology; nor do we expect to see the church of God putting on her garments of strength and salvation, until her pulpits become more manly in asserting the great peculiarities of the Christian faith, and her presses, instead of "making a gain of godliness," deem "godliness with contentment great gain."

If there be a truth that humbles the lofty looks of man, it is that he is absolutely dependent on discriminating grace. If the righteous were made

to differ from the wicked, because they deserve it, they would have whereof to glory. But to differ from the world that lieth in wickedness, and be saved only by sovereign grace, is one of those truths that strips them of every rag of self-righteousness, and that may well banish every relic of pride from their hearts. It is a truth which exalts God on the throne, and humbles the sinner at his feet. A creature that is polluted—a sinner that is snatched from the pit by the outstretched hand of sovereign mercy, has nothing in which to glory save the cross of Christ.

"If thou take forth the precious from the vile," saith God to the prophet, "thou shalt be as my mouth." It is not more true that there was a difference between Cain and Abel, than that there is a difference between all good men and bad. There is no such thing as neutrality in the great contest which agitates the moral world. *He that is not with me, saith the Saviour, is against me.* The opposition is as direct and conflicting, as the difference between right and wrong. The righteous indeed are not so good, nor are the wicked so bad, either as they can be here, or will be hereafter; yet is there a radical difference between them. A good man is at best a very imperfect man; and yet he differs from one who is altogether sinful. He has *some* true holiness; which is more than can be said of any wicked man in the world. This is

the point where the difference begins. The consequence of this moral divergency is, that the righteous are habitually holy, though sometimes sinful; while the wicked are always sinful, and never holy. Holiness begun, habitual holiness, is the character of the righteous; total, unmixed sinfulness, constitutes the character of the wicked.

Nor is this difference small. Imperfect as it is, the character of the righteous is the fruit of the Spirit. Every one who possesses it is a renewed man and born of God. The promises of the gospel are all made even to the least degree of grace; where this is wanting, instead of promises, there are all the curses written in God's book. We repeat the thought, that holiness thus begun in the soul is the first point in the dividing line between the friends of God and his foes, between the church and the world. Let men differ here, and continue to differ, and the difference will widen, till the one is "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," and the other is a "vessel of wrath fitted to destruction." Let them differ here, and there is a perfect contrariety in their governing principles, their affections, their designs, their conduct, their whole character.

This is not merely a philosophical, but a great practical truth. Where there is the least degree of holiness, there is that supreme love to God, which is the germ of every holy affection; where

this is wanting, there is that carnal mind which is enmity against God, and which, as occasions and incitements are furnished, will express itself in every affection that is sinful. The righteous are penitent; the wicked are impenitent. The former is a believer in the Lord Jesus; the latter rejects the Saviour, and treats the offers of mercy with indifference and contempt. The former is clothed with humility; the latter inflated with pride. The former denies himself and takes up the cross; the latter cherishes the habits of self-indulgence, and esteems the cross a burden and reproach. *That* is cheerfully resigned to the will and designs of God; *this* is displeased that his will and purposes are not different from what they are. The righteous looks abroad into the world, rejoicing that God is on the throne; the other contends with his Maker, has the heart of a rebel, and would fain make the will of God subservient to his own. The righteous are attracted to something more than their own selfish interests; their love is large and diffusive, and terminates on objects that are endeared to the Infinite Mind; the wicked are attached to interests that are private and partial; their love is contracted, and their heart revolves in that little circle of which self is the centre. The righteous are habitually obedient to the divine commands; the wicked always disobedient. The righteous make progress in this di-

vine life, and persevere in it; the wicked persevere and wax worse and worse in their wickedness. The wicked live for time; the righteous for eternity. The one bears "the image of the heavenly," and puts on "the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," the other bears "the image of the earthly," and retains all the resemblance of the "old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." While the one is alive in Christ, the other is dead in trespasses and sins; and while the former possess a character, dignified, amiable, and lovely, the latter are deformed by sin, degraded, and odious. While the righteous are prepared for the elevated service and enjoyment of heaven, the wicked are prepared for the vile employment and deplorable wretchedness of hell. The saint is already an "infant angel;" the sinner an "embryo fiend."

Nor is the difference in their *state* less considerable than the difference in their character. The righteous are *reconciled to God*, and made *nigh by the blood of the cross*; the wicked are alienated from him, and *afar off*. The reconciliation between God and his people is mutual; they are friends to him, and he is a friend to them; and the alienation between God and his enemies is mutual; they are enemies to him, and he is an enemy to them. The righteous are pardoned, liberated from the condemning sentence of the law, accepted

and justified ; the wicked are in a state of condemnation, and the wrath of God abideth on them. The righteous are tranquil, because they have the relief of pardon and grace ; the wicked are like the troubled sea, because they bear the weight of unpardoned sin. The one knows the preciousness of the blood of sprinkling ; the other the misery of rejecting it. The unbeliever is an outcast ; the believer an adopted child. The one enjoys the liberty of the sons of God ; the other is a prisoner, fast bound in chains of iniquity. The one enjoys all that protection, and discipline, and intercourse with his heavenly Father which is the privilege of sons ; the other is without God and without hope in the world. The Christian is *an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ*, to an unfading inheritance ; the sinner is an heir of hell, and fellow-heir with reprobates and fiends to interminable woe. Seasons of tribulation and darkness the righteous may endure ; yet do they enjoy that animating hope, those blissful communications of the divine favor, and that sweet foretaste of the celestial banquet which makes this vale of tears a mount of rejoicing ; and notwithstanding their security and cheerfulness, the ungodly suffer that consciousness of guilt that spoils their mirth and embitters their joys. Covered with the banner of mercy, compassed about with favor as a shield, the Christian passes through the wilderness in

safety and in peace; and though he may sometimes pass away under the cloud, he more usually enters the dark valley in all the sweetness of resignation, the serenity of hope, and the triumphs of faith. While alas! unprotected, uncovered and unclothed upon, the sinner passes through the wilderness devoid of consolation and without a refuge, and at the close of his guilty career, without a smile from the face of Jesus, is forced away in all the bitterness of grief, and agonies of despair.

If we lift the veil and follow them still farther, we find that the difference that began in the present world is augmented and becomes eternal. Released from the fetters that fastened him to earth, the Christian wings his upward flight to the mansions of light and joy; while the sinner as rapidly descends the gloomy vale of darkness and woe. The Christian rises to that brightness, that splendor of moral purity that augments the lustre of heaven; while the sinner plunges in that blackness of moral pollution that adds obscurity to the gloom of the pit. The Christian rejoices; the sinner mourns. The former beholds the face of his Redeemer; sees adoring hosts cast their crowns at his feet; and as he listens, swells their song; while the latter listens only to wail and gnash his teeth, and add a deeper groan to the sighs that echo through the caverns of despair.

"He that is holy, shall be holy still; and he

that is filthy shall be filthy still." They differ both in character and state, throughout interminable ages, and to an extent which surpasses the largest stretch of thought. Not until death draws aside the curtain, can we form any adequate conception of the difference between the righteous and the wicked. One glance at the glories of heaven, one at everlasting burnings, will show more than ten thousand volumes wherein the righteous and the wicked differ.

So great is this difference, that it becomes the subject of interesting inquiry. Who makes it? There is some *cause* for this great diversity of character and condition. It is either self-produced, or produced by some extraneous agency. If by extraneous agency, what is that agency? This is a theological as well as a practical question; and it is one in which there is some discordance of human opinions.

It is sometimes said that the difference is owing to the intrinsic efficacy of truth. The human mind is supposed to be so constituted, that when once it sees the truth as it is, even though it does not discover its moral beauty, it yields to its appropriate influence. There are so many powerful motives suggested by it to induce men to become holy, that when clearly and forcibly exhibited, the truth itself is supposed to cause all the difference of moral character throughout the world. But the

very opposite of this supposition is the one maintained in the Bible, and confirmed by experience. Instead of yielding to the truth of God when it is clearly exhibited, the Scriptures tell us that "*Light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light.*" They are not converted without the truth ; the truth of God is the appointed instrumentality in their conversion. Yet is it not in the power of truth to control the depraved heart. If it were, why should this difference of character remain among those who have the same religious instruction, and enforced with the same energy ? Why are not the same motives at all times equally effectual ? Why did Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, ever preach in vain ? And if this supposition be true, what becomes of the office-work of the Holy Spirit, of which so much is said in the sacred writings ?

Sometimes it is affirmed that the difference is owing to the superior improvement which the righteous make of their religious instruction and privileges. All, it is asserted, have opportunities enough ; and by a due improvement of them, there would be no essential difference of character between one man and another. This is true ; and the wicked are without excuse for not improving their religious privileges. But this does not answer our question ; because it fails to inform us

how it comes to pass that one man improves his privileges, and another does not. And if this supposition accounted for the difference, then would it be exclusively the work of men, and the creature would become the author and finisher of his own salvation.

For the purpose of avoiding these difficulties, it has been said, that in addition to the power of moral suasion, and the influence of religious privileges, God gives his Holy Spirit to all men, and that by cherishing, and not grieving his influences, some gradually become Christians, and differ from others. According to this theory, the difference between the righteous and the wicked, is not made by an act of discriminating grace, but by a wise improvement of grace indiscriminately communicated. This view of the subject is equally far from accounting for the difference ; because it does not inform us why one man cherishes, and another grieves the Spirit of God. Still the question is unanswered, *Who maketh them to differ ?* -

To obviate, as is supposed, this difficulty, it is said, some *choose* to improve, and cherish, and obey the divine influence, and others do not. We know this : all men act freely in this matter. But why do some *choose*, and others *refuse*? The will is not the sovereign arbiter of its own acts ; the will does not produce the will. There is no greater absurdity, than that every volition of the human

mind is the effect of a previous volition. If so, what is the cause of this previous volition ? If one still previous, how came the parent volition into existence, and whence the first in the series ?

How then does it happen that some are holy, and others sinful ?—that some choose to love God, and others to hate him ?—that some choose life, and others death ? Who makes this wide and eternal difference ? In answering this question, we turn to the Bible, and abide the decisions of the law and the testimony. This Book of God teaches us that the righteous and the wicked possess by nature the same character, and are in the same state. They are totally destitute of true love to God, and under the entire dominion of a depraved heart. And in this sinful and guilty state they continue until the one is convinced of his sins, renounces his enmity to God, and exercises a saving faith in the Lord Jesus. From this period in their history, the lines of their moral character perpetually diverge. The one is a changed man ; he is turned from sin to holiness, and from the power of Satan unto God ; while the other is left to live and die in his iniquity. The entire difference between them, therefore, is to be attributed to the discriminating grace of God *toward the righteous*. The righteous are taken, and the wicked are left. The righteous are renewed and sanctified, and the wicked are left to them-

selves. It is not necessary that anything more be done than thus leave them.

This scriptural statement accounts for the difference between them. It originates in the Great First Cause. We trace the streams of mercy up to the fountain-head, and see them issuing from that eternal, immutable purpose which took its rise from the fulness of the divine mind, and the overflowings of those god-like compassions which could not be gratified without saving a portion of our fallen race; while the fountain of wickedness in the unrenewed heart is left to flow on. To the righteous, God gives his Holy Spirit, effectually calling them; to the wicked he does not give it. Time and opportunity are all the wicked want in order to fill up the measure of their iniquity, and become ripe for destruction. Were there any holiness in their hearts, time and opportunity might improve it. But there is none; and with such a heart, they are sure to grow worse rather than better. Let them enjoy what religious opportunities they will, they are sure to pervert and abuse them, and make them the means of sin. The longer they live, the more sinful they grow, and the more aggravated their sinfulness. Time, talents, health, Sabbaths, prosperity and adversity, perverted and abused, are all the means of their increasing in sin.

If we ask for evidence of this, we have but to

open the Bible and read such declarations as these:—“*The preparation of the heart in man is from THE LORD. By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the GIFT OF GOD. It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God. We are HIS workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. No man can come unto me, except it were GIVEN him of my Father.*” The difference is made by God in opposition to every other way of making it, and his giving that to the righteous which he *does not* give to the wicked. As though the Holy Spirit meant to exclude everything from the conversion of sinners as its efficient cause, except the immediate power of God, he speaks of those who had received Christ, as born, *not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* So then, *it is not of him that willetteth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*

The difference, therefore, between the righteous and the wicked, is made by God. By him, it is begun; by him, it is continued; by him, it is perfected. At a time when both were dead in trespasses and sins; when both were enemies; when, through their own obduracy, the instructions and motives of divine truth served only to rouse and strengthen their opposition; when they were equally stout-hearted and far from righteousness;

God, of his mere good pleasure, uninduced by anything in either, and alike disregarded by both, made some to differ from others by *taking the hard and stony heart out of their flesh, and giving them a heart of flesh.* From this point, their character and their condition diverge to all eternity. The righteous had been just like the wicked if God had left them to themselves. Where God is “willing then to show his wrath, and make his power known,” he has but to “endure with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.” The righteous are “prepared unto glory” by discriminating grace; the wicked fitted to destruction by the divine long-suffering, and thus becoming their own destroyers. Both have been partners of the same guilt; both might have been condemned with equal justice: but the one is taken and the other is left.

This is one of the great features of the divine government; it is the royal prerogative of his throne. Every glance at the history of the divine operations discovers the hand of discriminating grace. You cannot cast your eyes over the world without recognizing God as a holy Sovereign. You see a difference between the angels who kept their first estate and those who did not keep it; between Cain and Abel; between Noah and the antediluvian world; between Abraham and the idolatrous nations around him; between Lot and

Sodom, and between Jacob and Esau: and the difference was made by God. As you extend your views, you see one age and clime differing from another. One is an age of darkness and sin, another the age of light and purity; and the difference is made by God. One land is favored with plentiful effusions of the divine Spirit; another is like the barren heath. One minister labors, and has little else to do than stand still and see the salvation of God; while another labors in vain, and spends his strength for naught and in vain. So that wherever you look, you see the sovereign Arbiter of all events and all worlds himself drawing the line between the righteous and the wicked, bringing to the view of men his own supremacy, and magnifying his own "most holy, wise and powerful ordering and governing all his creatures and all their actions."

How amiable, how awful this exhibition of God's holy sovereignty! In what strong and bright colors it shines, and how will it be felt through interminable ages, in making some the monuments of mercy, and leaving others to hardness of heart! As the saints rise in glory and blessedness, with what a deep conviction of the sovereignty of God will they look down upon the regions of darkness, and feel that it is God who made them to differ! Throughout all eternity, it will be seen and felt, that the wide, the augmenting difference is made

by God. We have but to look forward to the end of time, when the light dawns, and the heavens open, and the multitude which no man can number are casting their crowns before the throne ; and then to look down upon that dark and dismal world, from which the smoke of the torments of the damned is ascending forever and ever ; to learn how wondrous the grace that makes the righteous differ from the wicked.

This is a most important truth ; it is a most effective truth, because it throws all *impenitent men* *into the hands of God*. They are dead in trespasses and sins. If ever they are made to differ from what they now are, and from a world that lieth in wickedness, it will be an act of mere grace—discriminating grace. Their dependence does not diminish their obligations ; for in all their moral conduct, they act for themselves, and without constraint. Yet such is their character, that all means, all motives, without this special, almighty, and sovereign influence, will leave them hardened in sin. Nothing can convert them, but the power of God. They will not be taught into religion ; nor terrified into it ; nor encouraged and soothed and flattered into it. Their dearest interests for time and eternity are suspended on God's sovereign will. Everything within them, and everything without them serves only to throw them into the hands of God. And if they complain of this, and murmur

at dependence so absolute, we can only say, let them do without the grace of God if they can. Let them throw themselves upon their own resources, influence their own choice, change their own heart, and become converted men without the interposition of God's special grace, if in their own judgment, they think they can do so. But if they despair of this, then we say to them, Do not quarrel with your own mercies, and complain of that which is your only hope. Take heed how you contend with God in this matter. It may be that you are secretly saying, with sinners of other times, "*Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?*" "Nay, but O man! who art thou that repliest against God? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?" If wicked men truly saw and felt their condition as it is, they would have no hope of salvation but from that very sovereignty they now oppose. Here you are a dying man, in the hands of that God whose forbearance you have so long provoked, and beyond the reach of help on this side heaven. Ministers can preach to you; they can pray for you; they can follow you with their entreaties to your graves; but if God does not lift you from the pit, in defiance of all that means and men can do, nothing is more certain, than that you will choose death rather than life. O that you did

indeed feel yourselves cut off from every refuge and hope except omnipotent and discriminating grace! You would then know what it is to despair of help except from God; you would bow yourself low before the throne, and cry, *Lord! save, or I perish.*

We have said, that this is an important and effective truth, because we see not where else *to build our hopes for the prosperity of Zion*. We rest them on the truth, that the difference between the righteous and the wicked is made by God. This is the only hope of a lost world. The work is God's. This is the only and last resort. There is no hope, if it be not here. It is upon this rock that the church rests; and by this she will live and triumph, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. No heart is so hard, that God cannot break it; none so unyielding, that he cannot make it bow. No sinner, and no congregation of sinners is beyond the reach of sovereign grace. We magnify this blessed truth, though it is a stumbling-block and foolishness to the world. God has the hearts of all in his hands. As the rivulets of water are turned, he turneth them whithersoever he will. We cast the souls of dying men on this his immeasurable and sovereign grace. When ministers have instructed, and admonished, and entreated them, and prayed for them, their last resort is to leave them with God.

Thrice blessed encouragement ! When iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold ; when under a clear and affecting impression of the deplorable state of perishing sinners, and a humbling consciousness of our own unfruitfulness ; there is encouragement in casting the burden on him who has never said to the seed of Jacob, *Seek ye my face in vain ! My soul ! wait thou only upon God ; for my expectation is from him !*

Observe and mark the indications of God's discriminating grace in the world in which we dwell. Has he not been in the midst of it, making some differ from others ? Has he not bowed his heavens and come down, and called some to the knowledge of his dear Son, and left others to reject the offers of his mercy ? Has not his discriminating arm been made bare throughout the land, in these churches, and in the midst of these families, and made some rejoice, and left others to mourn ? Is he not now plucking some as brands from the burning, and leaving others to lie down in sorrow ? And will he not continue thus to manifest his sovereignty and make it felt forever, himself drawing the line between pagan and Christian lands, between the husband and the wife, the father and the son, the mother and her daughter, the brother and the brother ! Solemn, unspeakably solemn thought ! “ *His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat*

*into his garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*" The cords of earthly affection bind men together for a little while; these frail bodies will indeed lie down alike in the grave, and the worms will cover them; but the final separation hastens on. Few are the years ere the judge on his throne shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And then—O the stupendous difference! The awful gulf will roll, while on its rapid tide some ascend, no more to look down, but to remember who made them to differ; and others descend, no more to look up, but to remember that the difference remains.

We speak for God, we plead for God, when we utter our thoughts on such a theme. We say to all men, "Give glory to the Lord your God before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains." To Christian men we say, give all the glory of your salvation to him to whom it belongs. You see who hath made you to differ from all his incorrigible enemies. You look back to the ages of eternity, and see to what you owe your hopes. You come down to the ages of time, and see every part of your salvation pointing to the agency of the king eternal, immortal and invisible. You look around you, and you look forward, and see how he that begun the good work in you will carry it on to the day of Jesus Christ. God and

his eternal, ever-enduring grace are the moving cause of the whole. *Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory!* He was under no obligation to have mercy upon you, more than upon the rebel angels, or upon the thousands of your fellow-men, who are without God in the world. Well may you say, "*By the grace of God, I am what I am! Not unto me, not unto me, O Lord! but to thy name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake!*" Your best honors be to his name! Let his glory be the animating theme. The spiritual temple rests on him. Built on his grace, it has risen; it rises now; and it shall rise; while every arch is vocal with the song, "*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!*"

## CHAPTER XVI.

### The First Quarrel.

THE first promise involved a threatening. It predicted the overthrow of the seed of the serpent, and the conquests of the seed of the woman. “I will put *enmity* between thee and the woman; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” There was to be a conflict, a quarrel to the death between these two seeds. A judicious commentator remarks that this single declaration “stands and will stand to the end of time, an eternal demonstration that the Scripture was given by inspiration from God;” and because “it unfolds the whole history of the church and the world, through time and to eternity.” These two families ever have been, and ever will be thus set in battle array, and striving for the mastery.

It is interesting to us to know how this controversy began. Melancholy to relate, it began in the immediate family of our first parents; between the first-born sons of the first man and the first

woman. It was a *religious quarrel*, and arose from the facts detailed in our last two chapters Abel, the younger of the two, was a pious man. Cain was a deist ; and so irritated was he at the respect which God paid to Abel's offering, and at the rejection of his own, that nothing could appease his anger until he had imbrued his hands in his brother's blood.

Thus early did the direful effects of the first apostasy show themselves ; and so tremendous were they, that the first descendant of these guilty parents was a murderer and a fratricide. Wickedness is in its nature malignant ; it sleeps no longer than its exciting causes sleep ; it needs but to be provoked in order to be the lopper of blood. Cain was not worse by nature than other men. Like all other men until they are renewed by grace, he had no delight in truth and holiness. He loved darkness rather than light, because his deeds were evil. The carnal mind is not only enmity against God, but enmity against man. “He that saith, I love God, and hateth his brother, is a liar ; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ?” Not more certainly is love “the fruit of the Spirit” and “the fulfilling of the law,” than all unkindness and hatred to man is the fruit of that mother monster, enmity to God. The Apostle Paul, in describing the character of wicked men, affirms, that they are

“filled with all maliciousness”—“full of envy, murder, debate, malignity,”—“backbiters, despiteful, implacable, unmerciful.” Nor is there anything that more certainly or more universally excites this malignant spirit than the truth of God. It required great obduracy on the part of Cain to resist the appeal which God made to him in regard to the unacceptableness of his sacrifice ; but he did resist it unto blood. He felt the reproach most keenly when he learned that Abel’s sacrifice was accepted, and that his own was a vain oblation ; it made him angry with God and angry with his brother. We repeat the observation, it was, throughout, a religious controversy. And we are confirmed in the truth of this remark by the teaching of the Apostle John, where he speaks of this very subject in the following language : “For this is the message that ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And *wherefore* slew he him ? Because *his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.*”

Though the first religious controversy in the world, this was by no means the last. For six thousand years this controversy has been going on, and exists in violence at the present time. Even now the great moral question is being agitated, which decides the interests of three worlds, and which involves the character and destiny of all the

generations of men even to the last judgment, and onward through interminable ages. It may be that the reader and the writer have a deeper interest in it than at first view is presented to their thoughts. The first outbreak began on the part of Satan in the garden ; the next onslaught was on the part of Cain ; and the battle is now going on in different forms throughout the earth.

*The PARTIES in this controversy comprise the whole intelligent universe. They are composed of the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness ; the kingdom of holiness and the kingdom of sin, wherever extended, by whoever upheld, and whatever may be their conquests. On one side are all godly men on the earth. By whatever name they are called, wherever born and dispersed, and by whatever peculiarities their moral training is distinguished,—these all belong to the same kingdom, espouse the same cause, and are clothed with the same divine panoply. Be they who they may, that possess the faith and the works of righteous Abel, and are baptized into his spirit, they are all banded together by the same sacramental pledge, and intent on the same glorious conquests. They consist of individual men, of churches, of extended and combined families of churches, and of different ecclesiastical families, each under its own standard, and all under the standard of the cross. They are the disciples of Christ, the com-*

pact and embodied forms of a Protestant and spiritual Christianity. With these are combined all the saints in heaven. From Abel down to the last spirit that was borne by angels to Abraham's bosom, patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, godly men and godly women of every age belong to some of the detachments of this great army. Though gone from earth to heaven, and separated from these scenes of sense, they have lost none of their interest in the conflict, but the rather has it become the more invigorated and intense, as they see it the more widely extended, and witness the zeal and ardor with which it is prosecuted in other worlds. There is no disunion of feeling or effort between the saints on earth and the general assembly and church of the First Born, in heaven. In league with these, are those angelic spirits who maintained their primeval integrity. These form an innumerable company, who have ever been among the foremost in the war. They are swift to do the will of their Leader, hearkening to the voice of his word ; and ever ready alike on missions of assault or resistance. Sometimes they are sent forth on errands of judgment, and execute their commission to the terror of men ; but more often on errands of mercy, sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation. Endowed with the noblest created faculties—with wonderful power and activity—with unfading and immortal

youth, and with consummate holiness, all these are fellow-combatants with saints on earth and saints in heaven ;—the partakers of their grief and helpers of their joy. Often do they tempt their flight down to this lower world ; often fill the towers of heaven ; and

“—— Oft on the bordering deep  
Encamp their legions,”

everywhere watching the progress of the enemy, and ever prompt and faithful.

At the head of all these forces is *Christ the Son of God*, and against whom the Foe is so embittered with rage. Of all the kings of the earth, he himself is the Prince, having on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, *King of kings, and Lord of lords*. He is the Lord of angels and men ; the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. “In his right hand are seven stars ; out of his mouth goes a two-edged sword ; and his countenance is as the sun shining in his strength.” He “hath the keys of death and of hell, and openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth.”

In this great warfare are enlisted all his wisdom, power, righteousness and love ; and with its triumphs is identified the honor of his name and cross. God the Father is also identified with him ; engaged in the same struggling cause, and pledg-

ing to it all his godlike attributes. With him also dwells the Holy Spirit without measure. His it is to instruct, convince, and reclaim the foe; and when converted and reclaimed, to build them up in holiness and comfort. His it is to overshadow with his celestial influence and presence this sacramental host, and guide and help them, and be their light and glory, their defence and shield. These form one division of this great army—one unbroken phalanx, one of the mighty parties in this momentous contest.

On the other side, are all the wicked, wherever they are found, and in whatever world. They are wicked men on the earth, whose minds are all at enmity with God; and who, with all the incidental variety of their character, in this respect agree. Whether moral or immoral, whether enlightened or ignorant, whether evangelical or heretical in their creed, whether cautious or incautious, whether exact in the forms of devotion or negligent, whether in the church or out of it, all over the world they have essentially the same spirit, and by their example and influence, by their rank, power and authority, are engaged in maintaining the same disastrous cause. The infidel, the scoffer, and the sensualist, the profane and the vicious of every description, disgorge their thousands upon this field of battle. Here are the worldly, the self-righteous, and the self-hardened;

and here are the thoughtless and secure. Here are assembled whole nations, with kings, and despots, and princes and the nobles of the earth. Here is every false system of religion, including the millions involved in heathenish darkness, and millions more that are involved in Mohammedan delusion, Papal apostasy, and Jewish unbelief. Confederate with these, are the departed spirits of all who have died in their sins. Though inhabiting another and invisible world, their character is not altered; they all belong to the same benighted and polluted empire. So far from having suffered any diminution in their zeal, from this exchange of worlds, they have enlisted in the conflict afresh; have thrown off all disguise, and sworn eternal fidelity to the kingdom of unrighteousness, and eternal opposition to the kingdom of God. In the same guilty alliance are the fallen angels; they, too, are consociate with wicked men, both living and dead. Once they were holy; but they rebelled against their rightful Prince, and were delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment. They are beings of superior power and intelligence, but of perfectly malevolent character; but for wise reasons, God permits them to exert a powerful influence in this lower world. From time to time, he unbinds their chains, and allows them to go abroad among the sons of men, tempting the good, blinding the minds of them that

believe not, and so influencing their thoughts and their actions, as to seduce and destroy. Sometimes they appear as angels of light, and at others they throw off the mask, seeking whom they may devour. Their name is *legion*. Stirred up with envy and revenge, trained to ruin, and expert in deeds of wickedness, they omit no opportunity of testifying their hatred to the woman's seed. At the head of these puissant legions stands *Satan their leader*—the old Serpent who began the war—the accuser of the brethren—the angel of the bottomless pit—the prince of devils, and the god of this world, going to and fro through the earth, and walking up and down in it, to lead forth the fallen and embattled seraphim. His course never has been doubtful, marked though it has been with deceit and treachery. It was he who seduced our first parents to that “foul revolt;” it was he who moved David to the sin that cut off seventy thousand men of Israel in a few hours; it was he who impudently ventured on the desperate enterprise of tempting and corrupting even the holy Son of God. And it is he who is still endeavoring everywhere to spread misery and destruction through the earth, rejoicing in nothing so much as the widest scenes of devastation and crime. He is the most active and accomplished supporter of the kingdom of darkness; malignant, watchful, crafty, indefatigable, laying siege to

every avenue of the enemy's camp, disputing every inch of ground, and maintaining the contest with absolute desperation. These constitute the other division in this fearful conflict. The same spirit pervades the whole, whether on earth or in hell. Such are the parties in this contest.

The *controversy itself* it is not difficult to describe. The foundation of it is laid in the essential difference of character between the contending parties. Good men on the earth and in heaven, unfallen angels, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all possess a benevolent and holy character. Bad men on the earth, and in hell, fallen angels, Satan, Beelzebub, and Moloch, with all "their horrid crew," have not one benevolent feeling, not one right affection of heart. The character of Abel was not more diverse from the character of Cain, than the character of these entire classes. The difference between them is not a difference of circumstances, but a radical and essential difference. Should Satan and all the associates of his fall conquer and subdue the Prince of Heaven and his devoted followers, the change in their condition would not alter their respective characters Christ and his people would be still the same; and the devil and his angels would be still the same. No change of place from hell to heaven would induce "Satan and his peers" to love and praise God as do the unfallen and redeemed; and

no change of place from heaven to hell would induce the unfallen and redeemed to hate and blaspheme God as do the devil and his angels. The character of the parties is radically diverse. Their views, designs, and desires are diametrically opposite ; and so long as there is this irreconcilable spirit between them, there must be mutual hostility. There ever has been, still is, and always will be enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. If we trace these different seeds in their dispersion over the earth ; if we observe the different characteristics of the different races of men, from the posterity of Seth on the one hand, and the posterity of all the other branches of Adam's descendants ; from the posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob on the one hand, and the posterity of Ishmael and Esau ; we shall find the same strongly marked difference of character. It is the world and the church ; the spiritual Babylon and the New Jerusalem.

The controversy is also *sustained by different and opposing interests.* Where men have a common interest, though they may differ in character, their interests often unite and bind them together. But where, in addition to difference of character and disposition, there are differing and jarring interests, it is impossible there should be harmony. So it is with the parties in this controversy. They have throughout, jarring and opposing in-

terests ; selected deliberately and upon principle, and pursued with uninterrupted constancy and perseverance. The one is contending for truth, the other for error ; the one for holiness, the other for sin ; the one for God, and his cause, the other against them ; the one for the interests of the divine law and government, and aiming to advance and magnify them in the earth ; the other striving all in their power to tarnish their purity, detract from their influence, and prostrate them forever. The one is contending for the prerogative of God's eternal providence, and desirous that in all things his pleasure should be accomplished ; the other is warring against the providence of God, and insisting that his ways are not equal. The one is contending for the rights of conscience ; the other would bind conscience in chains. The one is contending for justice, and the proper punishment of incorrigible offenders ; the other for the privilege of sinning with impunity. The one gives honor to Jesus Christ, bows the knee to him, and if they have fallen, accept his mercy, confide in his atonement, and rejoice in his salvation ; the other reject and despise him, tread under their feet the Son of God, and count the blood of his covenant an unholy thing. The one would fain publish the gospel of the Lord Jesus to all nations, destroy every false system of religion from the face of the earth, and turn the whole world to the service and

favor of the only true God ; while the other is laboring to deceive and corrupt the nations, and hold men everywhere fast in the bonds of iniquity and death. Such are their different and opposing interests ; interests as diverse as their character, as different as darkness and light—as wide apart as they can be. Just as the one prospers, the other declines ; just as the one rises, the other falls.

Hence it is obviously a *contest for ultimate dominion*. Each party has a different king,—Christ and the devil. Each has a different empire. Each is governed by different laws ; has different objects, and is engaged in different employments. Jesus Christ and his devoted followers are intent on enlarging and extending his empire, increasing his subjects, and dethroning and exterminating his and their enemies ; while Satan and his confederates are alike intent on extending the boundaries of his dark dominion, multiplying his guilty subjects, and pushing his conquests,

“ —With ambitious aim,  
Against the throne and monarchy of God.”

The controversy is deep, and earnest, and long continued. The one *will* not yield ; the other *may* not. On the part of God, it is a contest for *principle* ; it is a contest for the highest interests of the universe ; it is a contest for his

glory, and his name, and the rights and stability of his throne, and he must maintain it to the last. Such is the subject matter of this great controversy.

Nor let any man so deceive himself as to be persuaded that in such a warfare as this, he can maintain, either an undesigned, or studied neutrality. The necessity is absolute of espousing the one side or the other. *He that is not with me, saith the Saviour, is against me.* Neutrality is as impossible, as it is that a portion of matter should be neither at rest, nor in motion. There is not a human being who does not either approve, or disapprove the design which Christ is carrying on in the world; who does not either fall in with it, or fall out with it; who does not at heart desire either to promote, or obstruct its progress; and whose views, and feelings, and power are not enlisted in favor of one or other of these contending parties. The controversy is of such a kind as deeply to affect the interests of the intelligent universe; nor is it possible for men to stand by and witness it, without taking sides. Every holy heart is on the side of Christ; every unholy heart is on the side of the adversary.

It is absurd to suppose that any man should feel indifferent to the final results of this contest. Men may determine to act a neutral part; but there is nothing in which they are more decided. They must view themselves, and be viewed by

others, either on the Lord's side, or on the side of the Foe. There the all-searching eye of God sees them ; there they will be found when they come to die ; and there will they appear throughout eternity. On which side is the reader found ? Shut up to the necessity of a choice, what is it, and what shall it be ? With the burden of this election upon him, to which side will he give the preference ?

In considering this great question, let him consider the character of the contending parties. On one side, are all the holy ; on the other, are all the unholy. With which will he be associated ? Is he content to remain confederate with the enemies of God on earth and in hell—with the unbelieving and reprobate—with the vicious and the profligate—with the devil and his angels ? Will he be found among the chaff and offscouring of God's creation, or its joy and crown ? Will he consent to be the slave of sin and death, or the child of God ? Which is the more creditable to his heart, to his conscience, to his intellect, to his high ambition ? Which is the “legion of honor ?” “You see your calling, brethren”—a high and heavenly calling, and one that associates you with all that is high and honorable in the universe.

Consider also the claims of truth and rectitude. The cause of Christ, and angels, and saints must be a holy cause. It is the cause of truth and holiness, of peace and joy, against the machinations of error

and sin, and the wretched and miserable contentions and woes which have torn and rent the universe. It is the cause which engages the first love and ardent pursuit of every virtuous mind ; the cause for which God created and governs all things ; the cause for which he gave his Son to die, for which that Son descended from the throne to the cross ; the cause for which the ever-blessed Spirit dwells with men ; the cause which will finally result in an aggregate of holiness and happiness which will perfectly gratify the infinite benevolence of the Infinite Mind. In espousing the right side of such a controversy, there is everything to give firmness of purpose, and diffuse a tranquillity of mind which nothing can disturb. We espouse it with confidence, because it is the side of truth and righteousness. And if there be a bosom that is not dead to all that is attractive, to all that is pure and lovely, it will not hesitate to come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

It deserves consideration also, that the cause of truth and rectitude will finally *prevail and triumph*. There have been seasons when to human view, it appeared that the issue of the controversy would be in favor of the adversary. The seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent have alternately had the advantage. Success has seemed to hover over both sides, and the question has

been on which it is to light. There is no uncertainty attending this question. Every promise in God's word secures the victory of Christ and his people. *It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* *He shall reign till all enemies are put under his feet.* *No weapon formed against thee shall prosper.* He whose veracity may not be questioned has publicly and solemnly declared that he will increase the number, the power, and the influence of his people, and give them the superiority over the enemies of his Son. His faithfulness stands pledged, that *the kingdom and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the saints of the Most High.* And he has sealed these assurances by his blood.

In every age, he has also given his people significant preludes of their own victory, and the final overthrow of their enemies. The antediluvian world—the hosts of Amalek—the haughty Egyptians—the seven nations of Canaan—the Chaldeans and Babylonians—the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans, and finally, the Jews were all either destroyed or scattered over the face of the earth, and for their opposition to Christ and his cause. God is on the side of his people, and it cannot be otherwise than that they should prevail. He is wise in heart and mighty in strength. There is no understanding or counsel against the Lord. He has all means, instruments, and second causes

in his hands, and is constantly employing them in his service. Seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, sun, moon, and stars, ocean and elements are all at his disposal, everywhere fulfilling his word. Legions of angels, the armies of heaven, and the soldiers of Christ on earth are at his command. Even his very enemies he can so control and direct as to make them subservient to their own overthrow and his advancement. The whole universe is a magazine of means to furnish him with the instruments of subjugation or death.

It would be a pleasant service, had we space for it, to present a sketch of his triumphs. For the outline of these we must refer you to the predictions of Isaiah, Daniel, and of John in his Apocalypse. You will find them verified in the Gospels, in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the subsequent history of the Church of God. The history of the Church is the history of this warfare, and of the triumphs of the seed of the woman over the seed of the serpent. Never was this controversy more violent than in the first ages of the Christian era, when the colossal form of paganism extended itself from the straits of Gibraltar to the Caspian Sea, and from the deserts of Africa to the British islands. Emperors with their power, priests with their superstition, and schools of philosophy with their learning, were all arrayed against the church

of the living God. The cities of the world were the prisons of her children, and formed the scaffolds where they bled. Yet three centuries had scarcely passed away before Christianity was established upon the throne of the Cæsars, its persecutors became its disciples, and its temples eradicated the altars of paganism. Her next great contest was with the ignorance and darkness of the middle ages; it was a long and bitter contest, and far more terrible in its effects upon true piety than the persecutions under the Roman emperors. Christianity itself became corrupted. It lost its simplicity, its heavenly charity, its humble and self-denying character; and put on its borrowed robes of exclusiveness, worldliness, and pride, and identified itself with the grasping covetousness and unmeaning and absurd ceremonies of Rome. It survived this conflict, only to be plunged into the controversy with the deism and infidelity of the eighteenth century, and to contend with those great masters of thought and language, which were the pride of France, Germany, and England, and who, by a sort of magnetic intercommunication, were leagued together in order to crush the religion of the cross. When at length it came forth unhurt from this contest, it came forth arrayed in the garments of strength and salvation, armed with the sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith, scattering the word of God throughout the nations,

sending its missionaries to distant lands, praying always with all prayer, and standing still to behold the salvation of God in the quickening of his people, the multiplication and upbuilding of his churches, and the conversion of thousands and thousands of thousands from the error of their ways to the wisdom of the just.

It is the work of faith and the labor of love on the part of Christ and his people, against the works of darkness and sin of every form and kind. It is a crusade, not to rescue the holy land from the infidel, but to rescue the world from the dominion of the prince of darkness, and in which the saints shall overcome "by the blood of the lamb, and the word of his testimony." The triumph is begun, but it is not completed. We can see what has been accomplished, and we know the conquests that are yet to be achieved. Even now, opposing armies are retreating and melting away. And who can tell how soon the predicted battle of the great day of God Almighty will be achieved, after which universal peace and holiness will overspread the earth, and the end will come. And then the voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall sound. The Redeemer shall come in the glory of his Father and of the holy angels, and the saints shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. And then all hearts shall be made known, all characters tried, and the final sentence go forth.

And then this momentous controversy shall no longer hang in suspense; but an assembled and astonished universe shall see the hands, and hearts, and heads of God's people lifted up, and the hands, and hearts, and heads of his enemies bowed down, and *the Lord alone exalted in that day.*

Most deeply does it concern us to know which side we have taken of this great controversy. To those who have enlisted under the banner of Christ, and wear his livery, allow us to say, take heed that you be not recreant to your leader, nor traitors to his cause. Take heed that you delight in his will, rejoice in his government, obey him in all things, glory in his cross, and habitually and supremely seek his honor. The people of God hold a most important post in this conflict. *Be sober, be vigilant; for your Adversary, the devil, goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.* Let not your attention be diverted from the nature and importance of the contest. Let not other matters so absorb your minds as to induce you to lose sight of this spiritual warfare. The enemy will watch for your halting. You cannot be too wise, too harmless, too vigorous, too persevering. You have pledged your faith, and solemnly committed yourselves before God, and angels, and men. You have "published your manifesto," and taken your oath, that you will never desert the cause, nor go

over to the enemy. Courage! then, Christian, courage to the last! Immanuel's banner waves over your head, and Immanuel himself is with you. The cause in which you are engaged *must finally prevail and triumph*. Other kingdoms shall pass away, and become like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor; but the kingdom of Christ shall never be subverted. Though the numbers of the enemy are great, their strength is small; and though your numbers may be small, your strength is great. Gird on the whole armor of God. Fight the good fight of faith; and soon you shall be discharged from the warfare, put off the armor, and receive the crown.

It may be that some who read these pages are still on the side of the adversary. They stand on the field of battle, and are at war with God—with his law and government—with his gospel and grace—with his Son and people. They are leagued with the prince of devils and with the empire of darkness and sin. What presumption, what strange infatuation is this? You are contending with the infinite and *eternal God*, who kills and who makes alive, who is mighty to save or destroy. What a spectacle is this! To contend with God, the infinite and omnipotent God—the God of love—God your Father—God the source of your existence, and mercies, and hopes—what a shocking spectacle is this! You are persevering in the contest,

though he has opened a way of reconciliation, and given his own Son a sacrifice on the altar of justice, that he might bring you back from this unreasonable and hopeless revolt. He sends his ambassadors with this treaty of peace, to beseech you to become reconciled to your offended Prince. And he is sending his Spirit to touch your consciences, and recall, and reclaim you. That Sacred Visitant hovers around your path when you wake and your pillow when you sleep, and is urging one and another to desert the adversary and enlist under the banner of the cross.

Who, then, will give up this fatal contest, and become reconciled to God? How long halt you between two opinions? As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, lay down the weapons of your rebellion. The contest is fast coming to an issue. *The end of all things is at hand.* Soon the kingdom of the adversary will be broken, and his throne will fall. Soon the Prince of Zion shall take the contest into his own hands, and decide it irrevocably and forever. And then shall the glorious company who have won the battle, meet on the plains of heaven, with their robes washed white in the blood of their Leader, with palms of victory and crowns of righteousness. Then shall the prince of this world be cast out, and all the enemies of God and his Christ take up their abode in outer darkness.

And then shall there be conflict no longer, but eternal victory and eternal defeat—joy and transport on the one side, and lamentation and bitterness on the other, and never to pass away.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### The First Death.

FEW facts in history are more instructive and melancholy, than that the *first death* which ever took place in the world was by the hand of a MURDERER. What an humbling and fearful view must have forced itself on the mind of our first parents of the consequences of their apostasy! How strong the proof of that melancholy transformation of character from the image of God in which they were first created, to a close resemblance to him “who was a murderer from the beginning!” What demonstration of the moral depravity of the race, that the first-born should be so utterly destitute of true holiness, so insensible to the influence of motives that were virtuous, and so alive to those that were sinful and malignant! From the distance at which we look upon this deed of blood, we are ready to ask, How was it possible? Can the human heart be the subject of such great and awful depravity? What a

dreadful act was this; how indicative of a stupefied conscience and a hardened heart; and how expressive of revenge and slaughter, thus to stain his hands with a brother's blood! What a complication of evil passions must have found access to the bosom of that guilty and miserable man, and what utter extinction of his hopes, when, with breathless anxiety and boding terror, he heard the one agonizing *shriek*, and then looked upon that silent corpse! Never, probably, were passions known to human being more terrible than those which agitated his bosom. Whether he had been led on, step by step, or by his hatred of God and his jealousy of his more accepted brother, had plunged suddenly into this fearful crime, we do not know. But the deed was done which left nothing but remorse and anguish; which has made his name accursed; which drove him from the midst of all the warm and kindly feelings of home, and made him an outcast and a vagabond in the earth. It was not a stranger that he had slain; nor was it an enemy. There were no secular collisions between them; for there was room enough in the world for both, and they might have been mutually serviceable to one another.

No; the earth was *not* broad enough for them both. Though God's creature, and one who had as good a right to live as himself, he rose up against

him and slew him. There lay the brother whom he had once loved. He had broken and trampled on the nearest and dearest ties; he had murdered one who “hung on the same breast, dimmed the eyes that looked on him in infancy, frozen the warm heart that was cradled in the same womb with his.” Yes; there he lay—that youthful and manly form motionless; that smile once so cheerful, passed away in the ghastliness of death. And now the murderer stood alone in the field. God’s eye was upon him. Conscience was no longer hushed to silence. He had done his work, and the voice of his brother’s blood cried to heaven from the ground.

“Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, *murders*, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” It is not enough to say with Paul, “I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth *no good* thing.” The apostate mind of man is capable of all evil. It is a homely, but true remark of a quaint, but strong and sensible writer, “The spawn of original sin contains all sin in it: as a spawn is enough to consume all, if fuelled: as the mud, after the overflowing of the Nile, produceth all monsters; and the leprosy spreads all over, if let alone.” We are tempted to say, as we think of Cain, O, if this is *man’s nature*, would that I had never been born! Yet is this man’s nature; the source must be judged of by the bitter

streams which flow from it. God himself has declared, "He that *hateth* his brother is a *murderer*." Every man is a murderer by nature; he would prove himself a murderer, but for the preventing grace of the Most High; and but for that grace, his existence would prove a curse. I know it is a wise dispensation, because it was directed by God's wisdom, but it is a mysterious dispensation, that God suffered this first murderer to live. We are told that God "set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him." Whether he did this, in order to send him into the world, thus with the halter round his neck, and this brand of infamy upon his forehead, and render his life a burden; or whether, in that early age of the world, he would try the effect of his long suffering, we are unable to determine. One thing is obvious from the narrative, that the voice of nature, the voice of reason, the voice of conscience, the voice of humanity cried aloud for the fitting penalty of his crime, and demanded blood for blood; else would it never have been written, "lest any finding him, should *kill* him." If the forbearance to execute this penalty was to show what the effect of the divine long-suffering would be, most abundantly was it evinced in the revenge and bloodshed, and the scenes of carnage and havoc, and gigantic crime which made God repent that he had made man on the earth, con-

strained him to destroy the world by a flood, and subsequently extorted from him that great and universal law, "He that sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

But we say no more of the first murderer; he has gone to his own place. It is of the *murdered one* that we propose to speak. It is not a poetical, nor rhetorical view of *this first death* that most interests us. It is a more serious and practical view, and one which interests us as dying men. The names of Cain and Abel live in the New Testament history, and are fraught with instruction. We have already adverted to some of the lovely and heaven-imparted traits of the renovated and sanctified character of this murdered man; we dwell now upon his death—*the first death* on the annals of time. In its proximate cause, it was a fearful death; but that the world might see and admire the power of God's recovering grace in contrast with the terrible effects of man's apostasy, it was a peaceful and happy death, and as such speaks to every subsequent age of the world.

The question has been long and warmly discussed, Whether the doctrine of a future state was revealed to the patriarchal age. Among the many proofs that the great Jewish lawgiver taught this truth, none is more conclusive than the death of Abel. The New Testament has most distinctly revealed to us, that this first instance of mortal-

ity was the first triumph of redeeming grace. The Apostle Paul, in directing the thoughts of the Hebrew Christians to that "great cloud of witnesses" to the truth, and efficacy, and preciousness of the gospel, includes *Abel* in the same catalogue of worthies with Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, and then affirms, "These all died in faith."

How soon did death enter this newly formed world! Adam's first-born probably hoped to bury his parents; little probably did the parents think to bury their first-born. Sad assurance that death is the inheritance of the race! Human life is not only frail and fugitive in itself; but ten thousand instruments of destruction are always near, and wait but the divine permission to do their fatal work. The graves of those we love compel us to pause in our course; they are breathing-places in our rapid career, where we may look back upon the ground we have trodden over, and forward to the certainty that our race must soon be run. God does not suffer time to flow on broken by no obstructions, interrupted by no changes, and checkered by no indications of its uncertainty. Everything conspires to tell us that we must die. Vacant chambers, vacant offices, vacant seats in the house of God, and places elsewhere once occupied, to be occupied no more, remind us that human life is "soon cut off, and we

fly away." Day utters this affecting sentiment unto day, and night utters it unto night. The seasons, in their alternate majesty and beauty, proclaim it. The elements announce it; the heavens and the earth are one great dial which is continually sending out its monitory notes to tell us how much of our short life is already gone, and to assure us that its end is nigh.

Those there are who die, who never thought of making any preparation for death; they are "driven away in their wickedness." Nothing is more strongly marked in their character than a fixed aversion to "consider their latter end." The things of time interested them; they were wise to plan, and eager to pursue the business of this world; but they were slow to think of death and the world to come; or if alarmed by some fearful providence, they were constrained to serious reflection, the subject was soon dismissed and forgotten. They resolved, perhaps, to become Christians before they died; but before they were aware of his approach, death was too near for them to prepare for his coming. They were on the very threshold of eternity; nor was it until the last sands were dropping from the hour-glass, that some friendly voice whispered to them that they were already in the last conflict. Not a word was uttered about the interminable hereafter; not a thought was expressed about the immortal soul,

not a lisp of Christ and his redemption. The body died, and the soul, unprepared, uncomforted, went to meet its Judge. The bond is sundered that bound them to earth ; affection dropped its tears of grief, and the cold tenement of clay was committed to the coffin and the grave. Death closed upon them the door of hope and of heaven, and closed it forever. The account is sealed up ; it cannot be altered ; it is immutable as eternity.

The death of Abel was not such a death as this. "He died *in faith*." Let us pause a moment here, and inquire how it was, that he, and all who die as happily as he died, made this high attainment.

It is not in a moment that men prepare to die. There is previous thought and preparation for death, where this closing scene of life is tranquil and happy. Nor is it perturbed and distracted thought.

There is a God, and both living and dying men are his creatures. There is such a state of mind as the habit of reflecting upon his being as the most important reality in the universe, and of feeling that none can escape his searching eye, nor flee from his all-governing dominion. Men themselves have a rational existence ; a body fearfully and wonderfully made, and a thinking, sensitive spirit within them, that will outlive time and all its changes, and will wake to an eternity beyond the grave. Many a time a reflecting man will ask himself the question, *What am I? why was*

*I born? For what great purpose do I find myself an inhabitant of this earth, and what is the great errand on which I have been sent into this world of hope and mercy?* This short life is a most important period of his being. A great work is assigned him; and by the combined laws of man's nature and God's government, the course which men pursue here must influence their destiny through interminable ages. Those there are who have been attracted by the charms of earth; all the fascinating pleasures of sin have exerted their influence to urge them onward in the broad way that leads to death; but they have taken the alarm at this easy and rapid descent, and trembled at the consequences of walking in the ways of the destroyer. They have entered into their closet to implore the Father of mercies that he would "send out his light and his truth and let them lead them;" and there they have learned the folly of risking their eternity upon a life of wickedness, and rushing upon the experiment of living without God, and dying without hope. They have looked into their own hearts, and there read many an humbling lesson, and have made discoveries of their wickedness that have filled them with apprehension. They have learned that God is holy, and cannot approve of sin; that he is just and cannot allow them to transgress his law with impunity. They have read his threatenings; they know

that he is able to execute them, and that “he is of one mind, and none can turn him.” Their responsibility to God their Maker has assumed a character of most serious importance. They have sinned *against God*; the case is plain, that if they die in their sins, they must lie down in sorrow. It is a settled point, that they are heirs of eternity, and must forever dwell in glory, or despair. They have thought of these things. A secret voice within them has often uttered the expostulation, “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” This is the earliest characteristic of those who “die in faith,” and as Abel died.

But their reflections do not stop here. Such a state of mind as that just described is not often long endured. Those who are the subjects of it, either drop the subject of religion, or take another step, and repair to the gospel of the Son of God. Abel lived under the shadow of a dark dispensation, but he believed in the promise of a Saviour to come, and rested on that promise as the only foundation of hope. This promise was not yet fulfilled; yet he had no doubt of its fulfilment, and no doubt of the perfect all-sufficiency of the predicted Messiah as “able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.” “Not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, he was persuaded of them and em-

braced them." It were interesting to analyze the operations of his mind in view of the great truths of the gospel thus obscurely revealed under the dawning light of those early ages of time. It was by faith in this promise, as we have already seen, that "he offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain;" and by it, "he being dead, yet speaketh," uttering to us and to all men the value and preciousness of that great sacrifice whose "blood speaketh better things" than the blood of all other sacrifices. It was by this same faith that "Enoch was translated, that he should not see death;" presenting in his own character an example of reconciliation to God, to all subsequent generations. It was thus, too, that "Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet," prepared the ark, and "became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." It was thus, too, that "Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac." The command, "Take now thy son, thine only son, and offer him for a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall tell thee of," was a revelation by *actions* instead of *words*, of the great sacrifice of Christ for the redemption of mankind. Abraham had longed impatiently to "see Christ's day," and he thus "saw it and was glad." Yet none of these ancient believers had those clear views of the way of salvation by Christ which are furnished by the Christian revelation. They died in the faith of

Jesus ; but " God has provided some better thing for us, that they without us, should not be made perfect." The Saviour who was made known to them only by *promise*, is made known to us by the promise *fulfilled*. It is on this Sacrifice, this now completed and perfected atonement, that all who die in faith place their hopes. Their responsibility to God their Maker is sustained only by an humble reliance on the person and work of his Son. They receive this Saviour as he is offered in the gospel ; as their divine teacher, and as their only deliverer from sin and the curse. They have seen that there is no other way of escape, than by repairing to him who is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth ;" no cleansing, if he wash them not ; and no " light of life," if they take not up their cross and follow after him. They have been burdened and heavy laden ; they have been like the troubled sea, laboring and tossing, and found no rest day nor night ; but they enjoy peace in the ark, and "have entered into rest." They did not "neglect this great salvation." They found it dark at first, and perhaps hard to be understood ; but attention, thought, prayer, and God's blessing made this way of mercy plain, and they were satisfied with it, rejoiced in it, it was all their salvation and all their desire. It was no easy matter to give over laboring to build up a righteousness of their own ; they lingered, hoping that they should grow bet-

ter, and still striving to do something to recommend them to the divine favor ; but they found there was salvation in no other, that they had nothing to give for it, and nothing to do but accept it, as the gift of God through Jesus Christ. It was not in themselves they gloried ; they gloried in the cross. The love of Christ constrained them to live not unto themselves, but to him ; these new bonds of self-devotement they made welcome ; and when they came to the close of their pilgrimage, they found it gain to die.

Abel also had *relinquished this world as his portion, and had made choice of a better and more enduring inheritance.* "These all died in faith," says the Apostle, "not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and *confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* For they that say such things declare plainly that they *seek a country.* And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from which they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly ; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath provided for them a city."

The great struggle to which men are called is between the things that are seen, and the things that are not seen ; the things that are temporal

and the things that are eternal. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit," and the spirit against the flesh; and these are "contrary the one to the other." This is the great battle of human life. Earth and time array themselves against God, heaven, and eternity. Nor is it without an effort, nor without imparted grace, that any of the children of Adam are enabled to decide between these conflicting claims. Powerful is the appeal of the things that are seen and temporal; and not less powerful that of the things unseen and eternal. Men are creatures of sense; the appeal of the former is ever present and ever reiterated, while the appeal of the latter is from a distant world, and made not to sense, but to faith. Their own views and dispositions are naturally all on the wrong side of the question. They halt between two opinions, and hesitate to come to a decided choice. Their reason teaches them that this world cannot stand in competition with durable riches and righteousness; and their conscience teaches them that it is right to seek those things that are above. Still their hearts linger, and they complain of the want of power, of the want of time and opportunity, and even of the want of inclination, and wonder why the realities of eternity do not appear to them in their true importance. But by the grace of God they are brought to a solemn pause, and enabled to come to a decided choice.

The “eyes of their understanding being enlightened,” they “know the hope of their calling,” and begin to live for eternity. Their interest in the concerns of time begins to diminish, they scarcely know how, or why; the world seems more and more like vanity, and their relish for its pleasures is transferred to joys which this world knows not of. Their home is on the earth still, and here their duties; nor do they find these scenes and duties joyless; but they have other and higher aims, and live “as strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” They are gradually weaned from earth, and direct their steps to a different and more distant land. They do not, they ought not to depreciate this fair and beautiful world; but they enjoy and use it as not abusing it, for “the fashion of it passeth away.” There are seasons when they feel that there is nothing beneath the sun worthy of an anxious wish. Not unfrequently everything earthly seems to them shrouded in gloom; they look upon it as a desert world, and it is a soothing reflection, that “here they have no continuing city.”

Nor are these always the seasons of earthly tribulation. The world is still within their reach; its duties are not irksome, nor its joys insipid; its honors have not faded, nor was its wealth corrupted by moth and rust. But they seek a better country that is an heavenly. God, their own God

"has prepared for them a city." They "look for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." They have no desire to go back to the world. Like Abel and the ancient patriarchs, if "they had been mindful" of returning to it, they might return to it as their chosen portion. But their minds are made up ; they have made choice of a better and more enduring inheritance, where "God will wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ; for the former things are passed away."

Abel no doubt also *possessed a heavenly mind*. True religion exists in various degrees in the present world ; nor may we call its reality in question where the higher degrees of it are not perceived. An habitually heavenly mind is one of the most delightful indications of its reality and power, and the sweetest preparative to die in faith. Yet this is comparatively a rare attainment. Much of the time of true Christians is, and must be employed in the business of time. But while this must be so in the present condition of their being, they may at the same time employ their hands upon the world, and set their hearts on heaven. The best of men find this a difficult service ; it costs them great watchfulness and much prayer, amid so many distracting cares and toils of earth, to set

their affections on things that "are above." Their souls too often "cleave to the dust," and their hearts are sometimes overcharged, and "careful about many things." Yet is such a state of mind the ripe fruit of the Spirit. Abel and those ancient saints were men of this character; and they constitute a "cloud of witnesses" to the power and preciousness of that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Every heaven-born mind is substantially a heavenly mind. It is no longer a barren waste, where no heavenly affection blooms. Flowers of Paradise grow upon it; and fruits of righteousness, though stinted in their growth, there exhale their sweetness. Every heaven-born mind is a heaven-directed mind; its spiritual growth and expansion discover an upward aim and tendency. Though dwelling in this dark dungeon of flesh and blood, it pushes its way toward more sunny climes. Not unfrequently it has pleasant anticipations of the employment of the heavenly world, and sweet foretastes of its joys. There are gracious manifestations made to it; it is overshadowed by luminous clouds; and its evening twilight vanishes in brighter day. It is heavenward in its tendencies, and is more and more sustained and comforted by influences that are unearthly.

Minds there are such as these, and Christians

such as these. And when they perceive themselves approaching the end of their course, it is no grief of heart to them that they must die. They have thought of it, and it does not come upon them as a thief in the night. They have prepared for it, and it does not fill them with alarm, or even surprise. They have set their house in order, no hasty and perturbed secular arrangements disturb their tranquillity. The shroud that is to cover them, and the quiet sepulchre where they would rest, and whence they would rise to their Father's house, have all been thought of, and they welcome the hour when the "dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God who gave it." They well know that the cheerless regions of earth are not the regions where the heirs of glory should dwell. Their thoughts are heavenward ; their affections and desires are heavenward ; their treasure is in heaven ; and where their treasure is, there their heart is also. Their Father's house is there ; their inheritance is there, and there their portion and joy. The Saviour they love is there, and they shall see him as he is, and be like him. Loved kindred and friends, not a few, are there ; the believing mother meets her believing children there ; the husband, the wife of his youth ; and the widow there, is a widow no more.

Many a time do those who thus die in faith,

"desire to depart and be with Christ," and are "willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord." Nor is there any stronger indication of a heavenly mind, than this heavenward tendency. There is nothing that so fits the saints of God for heaven as this; or that so certainly destroys the terrors of the grave, and prepares them to die in peace. That upward look, how sweet, how bright is it ! Those hallowed influences, how sweet the fragrance they shed upon the pillow of death, how placid the tranquillity with which they clothe the sleeping clay, and how delightful the perfume they scatter upon the cold marble that covers the precious dead ! That conscience and heart so tender, those habits of the soul so purified, the whole being so encircled by an unearthly atmosphere, and imbued with the temper and spirit of heaven,—what proofs are these that heaven is prepared for such a mind ?

\* It was thus that Abel died, though he fell by the murderer's hand. It was not *he* who was plunged in guilt and wretchedness. He was meet to be "partaker of the inheritance with the saints in light." He had been suddenly taken out of this world's wilderness, and thus decked with the beauties of holiness, in order to be transplanted to the Paradise that is above. Was he born of God ; it was that he might be thus fitted for heaven. Was he progressively sanctified, and weaned from

earth, and attracted upwards; it was that he might “die in faith,” and when the “earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” He had washed his robes “and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” One there was who watched over him with unsleeping eye, guarded him by a wakeful providence, and redeemed and kept him by wonderful grace, and in whose behalf he uttered the prayer, “Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, even the glory I had with thee before the foundation of the world!” The fatal blow that severed him from earth, did not sever him from the family of God. He was one of those of whom it is written, “God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.” He was one of his peculiar people ; God was not ashamed to own him as his child ; for he meant thus early to render him the adornment of his kingdom, and in the day when he makes up his jewels, set murdered Abel in his crown. He was beautiful through the comeliness God put upon him ; and on this the day of his espousals, he was presented to him without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. He died to time, but lived to eternity ; he died to earth, but lived to heaven, lived to God ; and as a

"bridegroom rejoiceth over his *bride*, so doth his God rejoice over him."

The Scriptures speak of *dying* in faith ; and they also speak of *living* in faith. What God hath thus joined together, let not man put asunder ! They are the actings of faith in the ordinary course of human life, which prepare the soul for the more special and extraordinary actings of it at the approach of death. We may not look for comfortable evidence of a gracious state in the melancholy hour when the "last enemy" invades us, if we have no comfortable evidence amid the checkered scenes of labor, mourning and joy. Just think of Abel, if he had looked for a death-bed repentance ! There must be something to feed these vital hopes beside the dying embers that are just ready to expire. If the goal be attained, the race must be run. Joy and peace in believing are the results of the process of redemption in our own hearts. The fear of death will hold us in bondage, if we wait till he approaches, for the delightful, or even the tranquil anticipations of the heavenly immortality. It is a vain hope to expect to bask in the brightness of the divine presence when the last dark cloud of time overshadows us, if we have never walked in the light of God's countenance while travelling through the wilderness. Take heed, then, how you allow your minds to be so absorbed in the pursuits of time, that, in-

stead of living as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and seeking a better country, that is an heavenly, your thoughts and habits become so secularized that when you lie on your bed of languishing, the terrible apprehension shall agitate you, that the God of heaven is not your refuge, your portion, your resting-place. A living faith carries its own evidence with it. It shines by its own light, and shines brightest when it gilds the dark mountains that hide it from the view of men.

But are there not some of my readers to whom we must address a different language? Are there not those of whom, had the rapacious grave swallowed them up before the present hour, it could not have been said, That they died as peacefully as Abel died? Melancholy thought! Temporal death would only have conducted you to the death eternal; the dark grave would have been but the short passage to a darker eternity. What thanks do you not owe to God's forbearance, that it is still the day of your merciful visitation! Even now, after so long a time, you may flee to the Saviour's arms, and in him find the earnest and pledge of that life which is forfeited by sin and restored by grace. If you would die in faith, your hearts must bow to the claims of that Saviour. If those who follow your mortal bodies to the grave, are elevated above the sorrows and afflictions which oppress them by your departure, it must be be-

cause they cherish heavenly hopes for you after you sleep in the dust. There is no such consolation to the dying, there is no such balm to the wounds of the bereaved as this. Will *you* die without it; or, without it, will *you* leave *them* to mourn? O this were cruel!—cruelty to them—cruelty to your own souls! It is unutterably painful to think of living thus, and dying thus, in full view of the all-sufficient provisions of the gospel. You may be nearer to death than you are aware, but not nearer than is God's offered salvation. The “kingdom of God is come nigh unto you,” in all its fulness and all its adaptation to your wants and woes. Its truths and mercy meet you as a creature born for immortality, and accountable to God the judge of all. They meet you as a sinner, under his wrath and curse, and tell you of one, and but one way of escape. They solemnly admonish you to “flee from the wrath to come;” and they tenderly expostulate with you in language you cannot misunderstand, when they say, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and he will *have mercy upon him*, and to our God, for he will ABUNDANTLY PARDON.” They proclaim to you, “Behold *now* is the accepted time; behold *now* is the day of salvation!” They startle you by their warnings; they allure you by their consolations and hopes.

Fearful terrors issue from them, if you disregard their call ; if you obey, sweet peace and heavenly radiance. Yes, *peace*—“ peace of God which passeth all understanding ;” a radiance so pure and heavenly, that it cannot be obscured even by the night of the grave. But they most solemnly caution you against *delay*. They hold no man guiltless who hesitates to become the friend of truth and duty. They give you no warrant to presume on the abused patience of God for a future season of repentance ; because inexorable death is hastening on the hour when “ your souls shall be required of you.” The invisible and noiseless Foe has not yet come up into your chambers. He waits a little to see whether you will awake from this fatal slumber and make your peace with God and heaven ; or whether you will still go on in your trespasses, and bury these immortal hopes without a sigh.

It were wise to be prepared for *sudden* death. Abel had not a moment’s warning. Few men know the time when death will come. You cannot appoint your own time. We have adverted to the first death ; we do not know the last. Nor can we predict the next, nor say that it will not be yours or mine. On this solemn subject, God’s word and his providence are alike silent ; while both unite in urging the admonition, “ Boast not thyself of to-morrow ; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth !” “ Human life is a lighted taper

in the hands of a watchful providence." How watchfully must it be covered by the hand, or a fold of the garment, of him who carries it! A drop of rain, or dew, a breath of air, and it is extinguished. A thousand instruments of destruction are always near it. "It is a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

Is it wise, then, to defer accepting the great salvation in which the first departed of our race placed his confidence? Ask this question at Abel's grave, where the mourners wept, but wept not because their first-born was born to die? Ask it at the grave of the millions who since that time have been numbered with the dead? Ask it of your own beating pulse, where the question is put sixty times a minute, whether you shall live or die?

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### The First Example of Eminent Piety.

THE thought is not always present to our minds, to what extent and by what a variety of means, the God of heaven is consulting the interests of moral rectitude in this fallen world. Next to his own glory, and as the great means of promoting the highest manifestations of his own glorious nature, is the *personal holiness* of those who are interested in the blessings of his grace. The special design of the method of redemption, is to secure the interests of holiness : “God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit ;” whom “he did foreknow, he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.” The influences of his Spirit are promised and imparted for this end. Create within me “a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me ;”—“I will give them an heart to know me ;”—then will “I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean, and from all your filthiness and from all

your idols will I cleanse you." All the truths of the gospel are "according to godliness," and are revealed that they may become principles of holiness. They are all of the holiest tendency, and teach men that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world." This was the great object of the Saviour's incarnation and sacrifice. "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." The promises which in his word are revealed that "we might be partakers of the divine nature;" the hopes which he imparts are holy hopes and hopes of holiness; while the heaven to which the eye of faith is directed is a holy world, where "there shall enter nothing that defileth;" which "without holiness no man shall see;" into which God "shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations;" and the perfection of whose blessedness shall be, that its inhabitants shall "be like him, for they shall see him as he is."

It would be a delightful fact, if, in the early history of the world, some vivid exemplification of the power of divine grace could be discovered so clearly as to influence all succeeding generations, and encourage them to aim at high attainments in the divine life. There is one such record. There were good men before; but there is no

example of eminent piety, until we come to Enoch, in the line of Seth. He was the son of Jared and the father of Methusaleh, the most aged of all the ancient patriarchs, and the oldest man on the records of history. Enoch himself lived three hundred and sixty-five years. He was sixty-five years of age at the birth of his first child ; and from the sacred record, we may infer he became a pious man, not far from the time when he first felt the obligations of the parental relation. That record informs us that "Enoch walked with God after he begat Methusaleh, three hundred years." His name implies that he was the *instructed and dedicated one* ; instructed in the knowledge of God, and dedicated to his service. There is no description of piety more beautiful or more emphatic, than is contained in these few words, "he walked with God." The age in which he lived was a corrupt and corrupting age ; but he had no sympathy with its spirit, its maxims, its habits, or its character. The men of the world were not his chosen companions ; he did not walk with them ; he came out from the world and "walked with God." He did not walk contrary to him, but with him. The native enmity of his carnal mind was slain ; God was his portion, and refuge, and joy. There was peace between him and his Maker ; he was reconciled to all that God is, and all that he does ; they could walk together, because they were

agreed. He was the friend of God, and treated God as his friend. He was dutiful in his spirit, and in his life obedient. His fellowship was the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. Sweet was this intercourse, sweet his confidence, and very many and precious were the tokens he enjoyed of the divine favor. The Apostle, in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, affirms that “he had this testimony that he *pleased* God.”

If we may rely on the testimony of pagan and Christian authors, his memory was long revered, not only in the church of God, but in the pagan world. In that early age, this one man was raised up to exemplify the power of vital godliness, and bear significant testimony to the efficacy of the promised redemption. Such was the maturity of his religion, and so distinguished was he for his unearthly spirit, that he was translated to the heavenly world without tasting of death. When we now point men to a bright immortality, we must tell them that it lies through the grave. His high privilege was to escape the struggle, to be turned aside from the dark valley, to travel above it, and to find his mortal swallowed up in his immortality, without this conflict with the dread destroyer. “Enoch walked with God, and he *was not*, for God took him.” He was favored above Aaron, who *went up* the mount to die; and above Moses, who, instead of descending into the vale, died amid the

mountain glories of Pisgah. He walked with God, and was no longer found in the abodes of men. He was not among the living, nor was he numbered with the dead; God took him. His sojourn on the earth was comparatively short; nor was the ordinary promise of long life to the virtuous and holy, verified in his history. This privilege was unpromised, and altogether above and beyond the region of the promises. It was the reward of piety, well nigh as signal as his translation. God took him from the sins and sorrows of earth, from its scoffing and hateful associates, from the gloom and fears of death, and the loathsome corruption of the grave, to his own heaven of light and love, to the society of his fathers, to his own presence and joy, and to the beatific vision of a progressively unfolding eternity.

None of us may hope for such a dismission from the scenes of earth as his; yet ought we to hope, and pray, and strive for such a piety. We should not be Christians, if we did not desire to be like Enoch; nor should we have the fitting evidence of piety, if we aim not at piety that is eminent. Ask a truly Christian man in what he takes the greatest delight; and he will answer, the service of God. Ask him what he most desires; and he will answer, more and greater conformity to God. Ask him what he most prays for; and he will tell you, it is that I may be delivered from

sin and made holy. Ask him what the ardent wishes of his heart are in behalf of the church of God on the earth ; and he will reply, it is that they may indeed be a peculiar people, purified from sin, and so live that they shall more honor Him who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light. The first great object of the gospel is to bring men to the saving knowledge of Christ, and then make them bright, shining, and useful Christians.

Piety is not the growth of a moment. It begins in the soul when it is born of God. Not until the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, is any one of our fallen race otherwise than “dead in trespasses and sins.” The holiness subsequently produced is as really the work of God, and differs not either in its cause or nature, from the holiness first imparted. Wherever there is pre-eminent piety, it is “the work of God’s Spirit, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.” Sound theology and Christian experience show, that spiritual life is, in this respect, analogous to the life that is natural ; it has its infancy, its youth, and its full-grown manhood. Just as in the vegetable creation, there is the implantation of the seed, or the insertion of the scion, and then the progressive enlargement and growth of the branch, the bough, the tree, till it bears

fruit, "some twenty, some sixty, some an hundred fold;" so is it in the kingdom of God.

When we advert to the character of good men, as delineated in the Scriptures, we see that their piety, though not uniformly, was really progressive. No man doubts that Abraham had attained to higher degrees of holiness, when he ascended Mount Moriah to offer up his son, than when God first called him from Ur of the Chaldees;—or that Moses had attained to higher degrees of holiness, when from the summit of Pisgah he surveyed the promised land, than when God at first appeared to him in the burning bush at Horeb;—or that the great Apostle had made higher attainments in holiness, when just on the eve of martyrdom he exclaimed, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand," than when he first fell at Jesus' feet on his way to Damascus. Who can doubt that the piety of Payson, while a student at Harvard, or an instructor of the academy at Portland, bore no comparison with that enviable state of mind, which he enjoyed for several weeks before his death, and of which he says, "The celestial city is full in my view. Its glories beam upon me; its breezes fan me; its odors are wafted to me; its sounds strike upon my ears; its spirit is breathed into my heart."

There is a *constancy* of holy affection in ad-

vanced piety, which is not discoverable in piety of a feebler growth. The main difference between one good man and another is, that one exercises gracious affections more constantly than another. If the gracious exercises of the renewed nature were not so frequently suspended, its sanctification would be most discernible and rapid. Just in proportion to the constancy of grace, is the progress of grace. In the same measure also in which the power of true religion becomes constant, it becomes more *complete*; in the progress of piety in the soul, a Christian man is more uniformly Christian, and manifests more and more *all* the graces of the Spirit. There is discoverable in advanced piety a sensible increase of love to God and love to man; a more scrupulous attention to moral duties, as well as religious observances; a growing watchfulness and caution in matters of great and less importance;—all combined and blended in the exhibition of a character more and more like that of Jesus Christ. There may be less that is novel in mature holiness, but there is less that is transient; there may be less that is fervid, but there is less that is fluctuating; there may be less excitability, but there is more permanency; there may be less that is rapturous, but there is more that is consistent and productive,—more of the habit and principle of piety, and more that is unwearyed in holy purposes and benevolent achieve-

ment. Piety also, as it increases in constancy and completeness, increases in *strength*. The reason why it does not always *appear* to increase in strength is, that there are seasons when it is less associated with mere animal excitement. Subtract the animal excitement from those vivid expressions of holiness which are so common in the career of the youthful Christian, and then compare them with the gracious affections of his maturer years; and the latter will be found the most vigorous. Supreme love to God in a mind long habituated to the exercises of piety, is a stronger and more holy affection than it is in the same mind before it is thus disciplined. Different degrees of constitutional ardor and sensibility distinguish different men; but, other things being equal, piety is most vigorous and energetic, where it is most constant and mature. It is nourished and invigorated by its own fixed and steady purposes; draws toward itself, and concentrates all the scattered affections; and thus acquires an augmented vigor and ardency.

In the happier instances of pre-eminent piety, you shall see a man affectionate and humble in his disposition and deportment—discreet in his conduct, and prudent in his opinions—less and less inordinate in his animal emotions—more cautious in his intercourse with men—less rash, and more forbearing—more afraid of sinning, and more watchful against the encroachments of temptation

—more submissive, and more thankful—more self-denying, and yet more cheerful and happy—more patient, kind, and forgiving—less contentious, and more peaceful—more distrustful of himself, and more full of confidence in God. He adds to his faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; “and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.” These beautiful characteristics are all so blended and linked together, that they act upon one another in harmonious union, and form one heart and soul. And with these, you shall discover more enlarged views of God and spiritual objects—sweeter and more satisfying views of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ—a deeper and sweeter fellowship with things unseen—a more thorough detachment from the world, and a more absolute renunciation of sublunary confidences and created good—together with more earnest and intense desires after holiness, and a more uneclipsed and transforming vision of the divine glory.

There is also in such a mind a sensible increase of spiritual enjoyment. In the world such a man may have tribulation; yet is he a most happy man. He drinks at never-failing fountains of joy, and goes not to earthly cisterns to draw. He has resources out of and above the world. There is no satiety and disgust in his enjoyments, and no

disappointment. His cup is not dashed with the bitterness of regret, nor mingled with the terrors of apprehension. His prospects may not be cloudless, but they are light and gladsome; they may not be always brilliant, but they are calm and peaceful. Precious are his foretastes of the rest that remaineth for the people of God; and precious are his views of the glory to be hereafter revealed. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, he is changed unto the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

In regard to the *means by which pre-eminent piety is produced*, several things deserve consideration.

It is a principle of the gospel never to be lost sight of, that gracious affections, both in their commencement and progress, are all exercised in view of *truth*. "Sanctify them through thy truth!" One of the more obvious ways in which truth is presented to the mind, is the *direct contemplation of it, by the increase of divine knowledge*. The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Colossians, says, "We do not cease to pray for you and to desire that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; so that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work." The Apostle Peter expresses the same sentiment when he says, "Grow in grace, and in the knowl-

*edge* of our Lord Jesus Christ ;” and also when he enjoins, “ As new-born babes *desire* the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” The knowledge of divine truth is, to the renewed mind, what food is to the body ; it is the native and proper aliment of every gracious affection. There is high and holy joy in a clear perception of the nature, connections, consequences, and glory of the truth of God. The sensations of a devout mind in the contemplation of divine truth are like those of a hungry man when he sits down to a feast ; he is *fed* ; his hungering and thirsting after righteousness are gratified. Let him possess enlarged views of God, and just conceptions of his excellence and loveliness ; let his thoughts be turned toward the ineffable glory of the divine nature, as it is manifested in the works of creation, providence, and redemption ; let him dwell on the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ ; let him become more and more acquainted with the harmony and beauty of the divine designs, and the great end which God has in view in all that he does ; and his holy desires will be enkindled and flow out, his heart will become enlarged, his affections elevated, and his piety will become manly. One reason why Christians are not more holy, is that they do not read and converse, and think enough about the great truths of the Bible. There may be excitement and fervor

without Christian knowledge; but there can be little growing piety. By confining the thoughts to a narrow circle of truths, the mind becomes impoverished, and its piety languid and declining; while if we would raise the tone of spirituality and devotedness, we must raise the standard of Christian knowledge, and become more deeply imbued with the precious truths of the gospel. It is thus that the soul, instead of starving and pining away, is nourished; it lives in holiness, and is comforted in hope, and advances toward the stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus.

Allied to this direct and immediate contemplation of divine truth, and not less indispensable to pre-eminent piety, is a *scrupulous and sacred regard to the divine word and ordinances*. So important are these to progress in the divine life, that they are by common consent called the *means of grace*. They are the great means of instructing the understanding, rousing the conscience, and impressing the heart. One who regards them with indifference, and attends to them from habit or curiosity merely, is like the “barren heath which does not see when good cometh;” while he who attends upon them with interest, with an humble and docile spirit, and with desires that cannot be satisfied without some sensible advance in holiness, will “flourish like the palm-tree and grow like the cedar in Lebanon.” Under their combined and

precious influence, the full blaze of gospel light breaks in upon the understanding; the moral sense is smitten with holy compunction; and the renewed nature becomes gradually filled with all the fulness of God. Just as the intimate intercourse and correspondence of earthly friends increases their attachment, so does this fellowship with God in his word and ordinances, increase the love of his people. We read not a little in the Scriptures of the enlargement and satisfaction which the people of God have ever found in his own gracious institutions; nor are our experience and observation slow in teaching us how often have they anticipated in them the enjoyments of a better world! "One thing have I desired of the Lord," says David, "that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Again he gave utterance to the thought, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." The public and private institutions of religion, the common and special ordinances of the gospel, were appointed for the purpose, not only of awakening the thoughtless, but edifying the body of Christ.

The *various dispensations of divine providence* also are made to exert a powerful effect on the

spiritual character of Christians. All that God does for them, and against them, he designs shall work together for their good; and by these dispensations, he promotes their piety. Even their prosperity may do this. There are seasons when everything around them is radiant and cheerful. The heavens and the earth smile upon them with unmixed mercy. Disease, death, suffering, disappointment, mortification, want and woe, in commingled and furious elements, desolate the hearts and obscure the prospects of those around them; while no tempest beats upon their head, and no cloud lingers in their sky. Even when their horizon is for a short period overcast, the light of heaven's tender mercy soon returns to shine upon their path, and everything is peaceful and joyous. Health, friends, influence and reputation—temporal comforts and religious privileges are enjoyed in an abundance, as profuse and unexpected as undeserved. It is true, that unchequered prosperity is a snare to the soul, and often proves the hottest furnace to which the Christian graces can be subjected. But is it not also true, that "the goodness of God leadeth to repentance?" Not unfrequently the deepest self-abasement, the most unremitting diligence, and the most rapid attainments in spirituality of mind result from the wonderful exhibitions of the divine goodness. The flinty and rugged heart is softened, and melts under a view of

God's loving kindness ; the soul is overwhelmed at these expressions of undeserved mercy ; is "drawn by cords of love," and delightfully constrained to walk with God. It is not always, it is not usually so. "He gave them their request, but sent lean-ness into their soul," is too often the melancholy history of the child of God. Hence it is that the dispensations of divine providence toward pious men are often fraught with severe and protracted judgments. Instead of smiling, God frowns upon them ; he takes away what he had given, and leads them into darkness. He visits them with sickness, poverty, or dishonor ; he raises up ene-mies, or friends who prove faithless. By one visitation after another, he breaks their hopes and rends their hearts. By these painful dispensa-tions, he rouses them from their stupidity, "makes them know their transgressions and their sin," gives them abiding impressions of their depend-ence, detaches them from the world, and makes them feel that they have no resting-place beneath the sun—no continuing city—till they become possessors of that which no vicissitudes of time can assail, and whose builder and maker is God. This is what they need ; and such is the discipline by which God trains up his children for the heav-  
enly world. "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Afflictions, though sent for rebuke and chastisement, are tokens of God's love to his people,

and tests of their love to him. "The more self-denying graces flourish only in adversity. Submission, patience, fortitude, perseverance, and detachment from the world, are not flowers of the sun; they are planted on the beetling cliffs; they are watered by the spray of the ocean, and flourish amid storms and hurricanes." We "glory in tribulation," saith the Apostle, "knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience, experience, and experience, hope." "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit."

A very important means of progressive piety will also be found *in doing good*. The great law of the human mind, that both the intellectual faculties and moral dispositions are strengthened by exercise, is applicable to every man's religious history. As a stream preserves its purity and clearness by continually running, so does the soul preserve its purity by the flowing out of its pious affections. It is in self-denying and benevolent efforts that the sum and substance of religion are acted out. And who does not see, that by the natural expressions of their expansive and self-denying benevolence, good men become more holy; that "he that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully;" that every new accession of grace becomes the means of greater accessions? "Grace

for grace" is the measure of the divine bounty. The promise of reward to benevolent effort would often remain unfulfilled in the present life, if a measure of that reward did not consist in the increase of spiritual graces and comforts. Who has not felt this delightful reaction upon his own heart? The man who has never found his account in doing good in the increase of gracious affection, has yet to discover one of the grand secrets of progressive sanctification.

It may seem, perhaps, the merest truism to add to these remarks, that no person can make advances in the divine life, without *cautiously avoiding sin*. Every one who has been in the habit of watching his own heart, has seen that *all* sin, whether open or secret, pollutes the soul, and separates it from God. Painful experience has taught every good man, that he cannot indulge himself in sinful habits, and in wrong affections of heart, without sensible decline in piety. There is one thought which we may here be allowed to present distinctly, if not with some urgency; I allude to the danger of indulging in *little* sins. All such indulgence diminishes and tends to destroy all due regard for God and his law. The man who allows himself to disregard the divine authority in matters of apparently minor consequence, will soon find himself adopting a system of morality that is far removed from the standard of the Bible.

When once he ventures to make light of the decisions of unerring wisdom in some particulars of his conduct, he will, as a matter of course, weaken that high sense of respect for the divine authority which ought to be found in the bosom of every Christian man. He will form a code of morals for himself, as pliable as his own pliable conscience ; and by so doing, will insensibly narrow the sphere of great sins, and extend the circle of those that are small. He prostrates the only barrier which can ever arrest men in the paths of wickedness. The strongest considerations which are addressed to him in order to deter him from evil, become gradually effaced from his mind ; while his little sins, by a slow and gradual, though a very perceptible process, undermine those great religious principles which are the safeguard of the soul. In defiance of all his religious hopes, the necessary effect of them will be the diminished force of Christian principle in his own mind. If the fear of God and the love of his Son do not govern him, nothing will do it. No other considerations will keep him from profitable sins, nor from reputable sins, nor from secret sins. Men who indulge in little sins, overlook the strong bias of the human heart to evil. "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing!" Be not over confident; you know not the abyss of wickedness that is in the heart of man. There must be no ceasing from this conflict,

else is the Christian undone. Little do those men know themselves who think there is any such thing as standing still in wickedness. "He that trusteth to his own heart is a *fool*." When the Saviour taught us to pray daily, "Lead us not into temptation," it was because he knew what is in the heart of man. Let the Christian be familiar with thoughts of sin; let him indulge himself in the imaginations of sin; let him throw himself in the way of temptation for nothing more than to indulge his *curiosity*; and he may be abundantly thankful if he is kept from falling. There is no safety for him but in avoiding *little sins*. Without caution and watchfulness in this particular, there is most certainly no progress in the divine life. Sensual indulgences of every kind debase the mind and sink it below its exalted destiny. Luxury, extravagance, the intemperate enjoyment of any earthly good, obscure the moral vision, blunt the finest sensibilities of the soul, cool the ardor, and shake the steadfastness of its devotional feeling, and grieve the pure Spirit of God. Anger, wrath, malice, and other malignant passions agitate the bosom and expel the dove-like virtues. A corroding solicitude about the world—a covetous spirit keeps the mind in such a state of febrile perturbation, that it cannot grow in grace. Vanity too, and the love of praise, pride, and desire for pre-eminence, are inveterate foes of godliness,

Envy and contention, suspicion and jealousy, will always be found, to stupefy the conscience, and destroy spirituality. Every species and form of sin is like the deadly fang of the serpent. It is only when good men abstain from all appearance of evil, and as much as possible from all temptation to it, that they will be found perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. It is only when they keep their hearts with all diligence, and endeavor to suppress the incipient risings of iniquity, that they make any sensible advance toward that state of consummated purity, where they shall be like unto the angels, and holy as God is holy.

But there are thoughts on this general topic of a different kind. In speaking of the subject of personal religion, we may not overlook the *agencies* by which it is produced, and sustained. There is no principle more clearly revealed in the Bible, than that men are, at the same time, *active* and *passive* in all spiritual progress. “Work out *your own* salvation with fear and trembling, for it *is God* that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.” “*Sanctify yourselves* therefore, and be ye holy; for I am the Lord who sanctify you.” These are remarkable declarations, and suggest two important thoughts.

Eminent piety is never produced in the soul but *by the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit*. In the order of time, God moves first. He begins

the work of grace in the heart, and he carries it on. To begin it is the work of his new-creating power; he then produces the first active principles of piety in the soul; while in all its subsequent progress, he continues and sustains these principles. Paul says to the believers at Philippi, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." He represents God as "dwelling in the saints;" and by this he means that he continues to operate on their hearts by the influences of his Holy Spirit. The same great Giver is also represented as "establishing" his people—as "anointing" them—as "sealing them"—and giving them the "earnest of the Holy Spirit." Of the influence by which the saints are fitted for heaven, it is written, "Now he that hath wrought us for this self-same thing *is God*, who hath also given to us the earnest of the Spirit."

No degree of divine knowledge, no motives, or means of grace, no manifestation of God in his works, his providence, or his word, no human suasion, or divine, have any sanctifying influence upon the soul, without a divine energy producing this effect in view of the motives before the mind. Though God makes use of motives to accomplish his purposes, he always puts forth his own divine agency to produce this important effect, and by his own Spirit, causes his people to

press forward from one degree of holiness to another. When they are favored with impressive and affecting views of invisible and divine objects, it is because God "lifts the light of his countenance upon them," and "manifests himself to them as he does not to the world." When their affections are taken off from this world and fixed on the world to come; it is not owing to their own independent reasonings and reflections upon the vanity and unsatisfactory nature of earthly enjoyments, but to the influence of the Holy Spirit producing higher and nobler desires. When they enjoy unusual delight and satisfaction in the word and ordinances, and anticipate in them the sweet employments of a nobler world; or when they pant after the heavenly glory; their satisfaction and their anticipations, their every devotional feeling, and their every season of sacred refreshment and vigor, recognize God as their Author.

Nor is there any sentiment to which good men more cheerfully subscribe than this. Listen to it in their prayers: "Draw us; we will run after thee." "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me!" Listen to it in their grateful acknowledgments and praises. "By the grace of God I am what I am!" "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abund-

dantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." And is there not everything in the experience of the saints to impress, and deepen, and endear this conviction? Are they not conscious they once possessed the same natural aversion to holiness with other men? Have they not painfully felt, and frequently complained of their insufficiency of themselves to make any advances in holiness? And when they have been sanctified, have they not possessed as strong testimony as their own experience could furnish, that when grace is triumphant and sin is subdued, it is attributable to this transforming influence? There is in the best of men a guilty impotence to spiritual good, better expressed by tears than words. Even the renewed heart yields no fruit without the continued influences of the Sun of Righteousness. No matter how frequent, and powerful, and precious the means of instruction; no matter how affecting the appeals of divine providence; of little avail are they all, until the Spirit of God breathes into the soul.

Nor is it less true, on the other hand, that all this spiritual advancement is *the advancement of pious men themselves, and their own act.* They are active in every stage of it: it is throughout the act of the creature becoming more conformed to God, and making an unforced and spontaneous progress in the spiritual life. When God requires his people to "grow in grace"—to "abound

- in every good word and work"—to "endure to the end"—to be "faithful unto death"—he requires them to perform a voluntary service, and to be active in performing it. And when they become more holy, the act is their own ; it begins, is continued and completed in their own minds, just like any other series of mental acts. It is not God who makes them holy, in spite of themselves ; but they themselves who become more holy under his gracious influence. When they exercise more constant, more uniform, or stronger affections of love, repentance, and self-denial ; or perform deeds of mercy and devotion ; the act is their own. They themselves watch and pray, and follow on, and mount upward, till they become perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect.

These two thoughts should never be separated, when we speak of the cause of pre-eminent piety. It is the voluntary progress of good men for which they are dependent on God ; and on the strength of their dependence, pursue their upward course. It is God dwelling in them, and they in him. They themselves become holy, under the influence of a divine energy upon their minds. And there is a delightful consistency in these truths. It would be illogical to argue against their consistency, because they are made up of plain facts—facts the inconsistency of which no man has ever

discovered, either by his own experience, his own reason, or the word of God.

What then *are some of the motives to this high spiritual attainment?* We aim at low attainments in piety, because we feel as though it would be presumptuous for us to aim at higher; and because we have been in the habit of believing that high attainments are impracticable. But by the help of God, there is no impossibility in commencing a spiritual life and in advancing in this heavenward career. The same rational and moral faculties, which render us capable of one holy affection, render us capable of another, and of more constant, uniform, and vigorous effort, and of continued progress.

Nor is there anything in the experience or history of good men, that discountenances the spirit of this remark. When we advert to the names of David and Paul, of Owen and Howe, of Baxter and Martyn, whose light will shine through a long line of succeeding generations, we may no longer feel that the children of Adam may not become splendid examples of moral excellence. It is a withering, an annihilating thought, that it is impossible to imitate, and almost sinful to think of emulating such examples as these. What forbids our saying, that it is with spiritual attainment as it is in every department of human excellence; and that the more men set their hearts upon it,

the more they are unwearied in the pursuit, the more humble and prayerful their exertions, the greater will be their success? I say, what forbids it? Is it our dependence for holiness? So are we dependent for all things. And what is there in our dependence that forbids hope? What evidence does it furnish of confidence in God, where a sense of dependence discourages and unnerves exertion? It is a serious error when good men make this unhallowed use of their dependence. Wicked men are wont to employ this truth thus, and to their own destruction; while it is the privilege of good men to employ it for their encouragement in "forgetting the things that are behind." There is no humility in being afraid to resolve, that by the grace of God, we will be eminently holy, unless there be humility in resolving that we will remain great transgressors. It *seems* to savor of presumption, that such frail and polluted creatures as we are, should venture to emulate the example of the best of men; but does it not really savor of presumption, that we should determine to continue in our present imperfection?

No good man doubts, that to be pre-eminently devoted to God, is his *solemn duty*. God requires it: "Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy—This is his will, even your sanctification." Holiness consists in right dispositions and exercises of heart, and in right conduct. It consists in doing

right from right motives; and if it is the duty of men to do this in one particular, it is their duty in every particular, and always. If it is their duty to love God, to hate sin, to pant after holiness, to exercise every gracious affection, and perform every gracious act at one time, then is it their duty at all times. There is no obligation in the word of God fortified by more powerful, or urged by more persuasive considerations, than the obligation to grow in grace; and I do not know that in the sight of God there is any deeper impiety than indifference to this reasonable and sacred obligation.

In all their desires and efforts for progressive piety, also, the people of God *have the promise of divine assistance*. The promised influence of the Holy Spirit does not, we are free to say, lay the foundation of their obligations to advance in holiness; and yet this gracious influence furnishes the most happy—nay, the only encouragement to every desire and effort. Does God say to his people, “Wash you; make you clean!” he also says, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; and from all your filthiness, and all your idols will I cleanse you.” “Blessed are they,” says our divine Lord, “who hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall *be filled*.” At his triumphant ascension, this Prince and Saviour led captivity captive and gave gifts to

men, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Before his ascension, he told his disciples, that "he would ask his Father, and he would give them another comforter that should abide with them forever." And now he gives his people the strongest encouragement to expect his divine influence. "Ask," says he, "and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you." To enable his people to fulfil their obligations, and to enable him to fulfil his purpose, he will communicate his Spirit in such measures as they truly desire, and in every time of need. We greatly wish that this truth should be appreciated. There is no other hope of spiritual advancement but this *one hope*. If it be not in God's power to make it possible and certain with men to walk with him, this blessed privilege must be despised of. No man ever made any advances, without being sensible of his dependence, and going forward in the strength of the Lord God. Good men trust not in themselves; his promised help is the foundation of their confidence and their prayers. If they cannot make advances of themselves, and if they cannot make them by his gracious influence, they cannot make them at all. They *can* make them, because they are "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." They *can* make them when they turn from self and creatures to that grace which is "sufficient for

them," and to that "strength which is made perfect in their weakness." They *can* make them, for they are "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." They that "wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up on wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." Whose heart shall not such truths animate! whose courage shall they not inspirit! Blessed, blessed, thrice blessed assurances! Well may the followers of Jesus dismiss their apathy, "give to the wind their fears," and under the guardianship and patronage of such power and such promises, press onward till they lay hold on eternal life.

The *personal advantage* of high attainments in piety is also a motive which no Christian mind will deprecate. Enoch was safe; he was happy, because he walked with God. Men of pre-eminent piety are comparatively secure from the snares of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and have the best reason to believe they shall be delivered from reproachful apostasies. "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good." The Lord is with them while they are with him. He never fails to spread the wing of his protection over them, and shield them from their foes.

In pre-eminent piety, there is also a perennial source of the purest joy. We have already re-

marked, that it implies a happy, just in the measure in which it implies a holy state of mind. If a little religion is the spring of consolations superior to all the pleasures of the world; large measures of it must be an overflowing fountain—an ocean of delight. The reason why Christians are so often sad and melancholy, and derive so little comfort from piety, is, that their piety is of so slow and stinted a growth, and their graces are so feeble and languishing. They may make religion the source of few consolations or many; they may make of it just as little and just as much as they choose. There is enough in it to make them supremely happy; and if they fail to draw from it all the comfort they need, or all that it can impart, the fault is their own. We know, alas! so little of elevated piety, that we have never proved its joys. True happiness is to be found only in living near to God. Here the most enlarged desires, be they ever so eager and grasping, and extend ever so far, may be gratified without extravagance, without harm, and without satiety. This is the good for which the soul was formed, and to which its exalted capacities are adapted. “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee!”

The more we are like God, the more we are loved of him, and the more significant are the expressions of his love. Darkness and doubt em-

barrass the minds of *enfeebled* Christians. "He that followeth after me," saith our divine Lord, "shall not walk in *darkness*, but shall have the *light of life*." That peace and comfort of which the heart is so often robbed by inconstant affections and besetting sins; that light of God's countenance which is so often withdrawn, as a necessary discipline when we depart from him, would soon be restored if the soul were intent in the pursuit of holiness. And that depression which so often weighs down the spirit—those clouds which so often hang over the mind—those temptations which are the source of such bitter and pensive anxiety, would soon be removed if the heart were imbued with the spirit of Christ, and absorbed in God as its best and only portion. Nothing in this miserable world would come amiss if the people of God were more holy. They would rejoice both to do and suffer his will, and would be happy to live and ready to die.

Nor may it be forgotten, that pre-eminent piety is a necessary qualification *for distinguished usefulness*. The great end for which the people of God were created and redeemed, is attained in proportion to their personal piety. Some Christians accomplish very little for the honor of God in the world; they are little better than withered vines in a fruit-bearing and blushing vineyard. And but for here and there some solitary cluster

of grapes when the vintage is over, they would be cumberers of the ground. "Herein is my Father glorified," saith our blessed Master, "that ye bear *much fruit.*" Would you put honor on the name of the Great God your Saviour? would you redeem the pledge given to him in your self-consecration to his service? would you be more than cyphers in the world? then will you press toward the mark of the prize of your high calling. Many eyes are upon the saints of God; and as you are quickened in your course, or become languid and weary, so religion is honored or disgraced. You are a spectacle to God, angels and men; and your fidelity and diligence will be commended and approved, or your inertness and unconcern will be censured and accused.

O then, with what unexhausted, exhaustless ardor ought you to run the heavenly race! With what moral heroism ought you to fight the good fight of faith! With what high and holy ambition ought your bosoms to be fired in aiming at the crown! There is no danger of excess in this enterprise. If pious men were as active in the pursuit of holiness as they once were in the pursuit of other things, how would they be hurried forward from one degree of grace to another—how would the glory of the Great Supreme become the end of all their conduct—how would the lustre of their piety shine on this ungodly world—how would the tribute of praise be brought

to their redeeming God and King from afar—how would they make it manifest to the world, that they had not as yet gained their object, and that their sacred and loftiest desires were unsatisfied, till “Christ were magnified in them, whether it be by life or by death!”

Pre-eminent piety likewise *ensures a large reward in the future world*. If such is the economy of divine grace, that no holy act or affection will be hereafter unrewarded, how immeasurably urgent the motive to aim at high spiritual attainments! The most holy man will have the largest capacity for joy; will be the best fitted for the presence and service of God—for the fellowship and society of holy beings—and for the employments and felicity of that spiritual and sinless state of existence. Enoch “was not, for God took him.” “Whosoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Every new attainment in holiness here is the commencement of a series of causes, every one of which, in eternal succession, is elevating in its influence on the mind, and rich in unfading joys. It is true, there will be no wandering star in the celestial firmament; all shall shine there in the “beauties of holiness;” yet “one star will differ from another star in glory,” and those who have shone the brightest here, will be most brilliant and move in the largest orbit there. There are methods within the resources of his own wis-

dom by which the moral Governor of the universe can express the delight he takes in holiness in direct proportion to the degree in which it exists in the soul. To some who were eminently holy and self-denying men, Jesus once said, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom." Some there will be who will "sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." As it is impossible for us to predict *all* the ruinous effects of *sin*, as they are indefinitely diffused and extended throughout eternity; so we know not *all* the happy effects of *holiness*, diffusing and extending themselves immeasurably and forever. As the most sinful man will be the most miserable, so the most holy man will be the most happy.

Who, then, will have respect to this ineffably high reward? Who will stretch forth his desires for this infinite recompence? Who will fix his eye on the brightest jewel in heaven's diadem? Whose bosom will glow with irrepressible desire for the purest pearl in the crown of righteousness?

Christian! you were elected to be holy. You were redeemed to be holy. You were called to be holy. The choicest purposes of heaven's love are realized in the pre-eminent piety of the church of God. Christ loved it, and gave himself for it, that "he might sanctify and cleanse it." And when, by the various dispensations of his

providence and grace, he shall have purged away its dross, it shall be presented before him glorious in holiness, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

“Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.” Excel in holiness. Live no longer at “this poor, dying rate.” If you fear God and love his Son; if you have an enlightened and tender conscience; if you know anything of the blessedness of being like your Divine Master, and of being constrained by his love; you will long, and pray, and pant after still greater similitude, and never be satisfied till you “awake in his likeness.”

And is all this nothing to those of my readers who live without God and without hope? Why is it that they live without hope, but that they live without God in the world? There it stands engraven on the foundations of the Heavenly City, “Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.” All others are *without* the gates of the New Jerusalem. “The pure in heart shall see God.”

## CHAPTER XIX.

### The First Definition of Human Sinfulness.

It is one thing to describe human sinfulness, and another to define it. We describe it, when we furnish illustrations of it, when we speak of its nature or properties, and when we represent it by its resemblance to other things; we define it, when we so describe it that it cannot be mistaken, and show wherein it differs from other things which it resembles.

Next to just views of God, just views of the morally depraved character of man, are essential to the knowledge of divine truth. There is no doctrine more important to a scriptural theology and a scriptural piety, than the truth which the Scriptures reveal in relation to the character of man prior to his conversion. It stands among the *first things* which God has so distinctly revealed.

One reason why he left the family of man without a written revelation, during the patriarchal

age, and without those specific laws and numerous restraints imposed upon them in subsequent ages, and without those tokens of his displeasure which ultimately cut off almost the entire population of the earth; was to give the human heart the opportunity of acting itself out, of developing its true character, and of showing the obduracy, strength, and growth of its wickedness. The experiment was full, and the lessons to be derived from it are such as may never be forgotten. The sun shone brightly; the blessings of providence were showered down on every side; the wise gloried in their wisdom, the rich in their riches, and the mighty in their might. Men everywhere walked in the ways of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes. The proud were happy, and the men of violence and blood triumphant. The most enviable comforts were reserved for the proudest heart; the highest honors for the most flagitious life; the most remarkable deliverances for the most irreverent and presumptuous. "The earth was corrupt and filled with violence; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." They filled up the measure of their iniquity, and treasured up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath. They were left, in no small degree, to themselves, and at liberty to act as they pleased. And most fully did they discover their true character, and show what was in their hearts. Giant sinners they were, and

men mighty and renowned for wickedness. And not until this melancholy development was made, was that memorable sentence written, the force of which no philosophy has been able to pervert, no criticism to fritter away, and no false and smooth theology to pare off: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." We have nothing to do, but honestly and faithfully analyze this definition, in order to have some just conceptions of human wickedness, and of the natural heart.

The first remark we make concerning it is, that this is the view of man's fallen nature, AS IT IS PRESENTED TO THE EYE OF GOD. It were no marvel that men do not take this view of themselves, or of one another. They are not wont to take a just view of their own character; nor is it an easy thing for them so to do. We read of one whose prayer was, "Lord, make me to know my transgression and my sin!" There are obstacles to be surmounted in becoming acquainted with themselves, so great, that it requires even more than the ordinary lights of truth and conscience to make this honest disclosure. The Saviour has taught us that "when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will convince the world *of sin*." To nothing are men more blind than to the abominations of the human

heart ; nor are there any impressions which they stifle and resist more vigorously than those which give them just conceptions of themselves.

We do not suppose that any other being in the universe would have given such a picture of the human character as is here furnished, except that God who searches the reins and tries the hearts of men. The characters of men are not concealed from him ; he sees that the picture, dark as it is, is true to the life. It is not *God* who caricatures men by representing them better than they are. They are *men* who daub with untempered mortar, and speak smooth things, because they are partial, and seek to please men, and do not look on the heart. *God* knows and sees all things ; it is the heart that he looks at, as well as the outward deportment ; nor is his judgment ever wrong or perverted. He has no mistaken views of the human character ; nor does he ever form a false or extravagant estimate. There is no secret place where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves from his searching scrutiny. No knowledge and no ignorance, no original or incurred obligations, no station in society and no influence however acquired, no circumstances which render human wickedness more or less aggravated, escapes his notice. Whatever gives character to it,—whether it be the motive, the deed, the time, the place, the manner, the struggles of conscience resisted, the admonitions

disregarded, the barriers broken through—all is accurately observed by him who weigheth the actions of men. Desires of wickedness that are never gratified ; purposes of iniquity that are never accomplished ; iniquity that is prevented by the restraints of his providence ; iniquity that is embarrassed by a sense of shame, and by the fear of its consequences ; is all written in the book of his omniscience, as with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond. Whatever views men may take of their own character, and whatever views they may preach from the pulpit, or publish to the world through the press ; and however they may deceive and mislead their fellow-men by them ; they cannot practise this deception upon God. He has a full view of their wickedness, both present and past. Men sometimes, by some sudden flash of conscience, or some unlooked-for lifting of the veil from their hearts, see their own sins ; but they easily forget these impressions. Even those who are most impartial in their self-inspection, most faithful in their scrutiny, and most patient in their retrospection, remember but a very small part of the numerous transgressions of which they have been guilty. Memory sometimes runs back and alights upon some particular sin, the image of which haunts the imagination ; the remembrance of one sin sometimes leads to the recollection of others, till, by those laws of association which in-

fluence the mind, the gloomy path and the black recesses of wickedness are laid open; and in such a retrospect, the conscience feels a burden which it is impossible to throw off but by throwing a cloud of oblivion upon the past. But the affecting spectacle is always present to the divine mind. To his view, with whom a thousand years are as one day, the sins of the past are like the sins of yesterday. To no being in the universe is the history of human wickedness so perfectly known. He himself was the writer of that history for nearly four thousand years; while his providence has written it from the fall of man to the present hour. In discussing the doctrine of man's moral depravity, therefore, our appeal must be to what God himself has written.

The next remark is that the WICKEDNESS OF MAN IS GREAT WICKEDNESS. "God saw that the wickedness of man was *great* in the earth." It is always great; great in its nature, even where the overt expressions of it are not marked with high degrees of enormity. The mere fact that it is committed against God, is a transgression of his law, and assumes the character and position of revolt against his lawful authority, renders it "exceedingly sinful." The spirit from which it originates is the most vile, reckless, and selfish spirit in the universe, and is enough to stamp it with infamy. It is a deceitful and malignant spirit; the poison

of asps is under its lips, and its mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Jesus Christ, with all his characteristic meekness and mildness, when addressing wicked men, speaks of them as “serpents and a generation of vipers,” and declares that they “are of their father, the devil, and the lusts of their father they will do.”

If we advert also to the various *forms* which it assumes, and the numerous ways in which it is expressed, we cannot avoid the conclusion that it is great wickedness. It is radical atheism; “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.” It is enmity against God; this the Scriptures declare to be the characteristic of every “carnal mind.” It is forgetfulness of God; “of the Rock that begat thee, thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten the God that formed thee.” It is disregard of God; for it “sets at naught all his counsel, and would none of his reproof.” It is bold and impudent; for it “casts his law behind its back,” and “provokes him to anger continually to his face.” There is no expression of ingratitude with which it is not familiar; God’s complaint against men is, that “he has nourished and brought them up as children, but they have rebelled against him.” It is stupid and brutish; “wise to do evil, but to do good it has no knowledge.” It “gropes in the dark,” and makes men “stagger, like a drunken man.” It is “like the deaf adder that stoppeth

her ear ;” it “ loves simplicity,” and “ delights in its scorning ;” it “ hates knowledge and knows not at what it stumbles ;” it “ loves darkness rather than light, because its deeds are evil ;” and it “ receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are foolishness to it, neither can it know them because they are spiritually discerned.” It is deceitful and hypocritical ; “ speaking peace when mischief is in its heart,” “ feeding on ashes,” “ holding fast deceit,” “ hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,” “ waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.”

If we fix our thoughts upon deeds of wickedness the most vile and cruel, the most malignant and spiteful, the most implacable and unmerciful, the most expressive of diverse lusts and pleasures, the most sensual, the most excessive, and the most devilish ; we find them all, in all their atrocious and sickening forms, among the deeds predicated in the Scriptures of the heart of man. Idolatry, with all its concomitant vices and corruptions—Sabbath-breaking, with all its negligence, its abuses, its contempt of the sanctuary and its secret sins—the crushing severity of parents toward their children, and the wilful disobedience of children to their parents—murder with its blackest horrors, and war with its fiercest devastations—licentiousness with its degrading associations, and its abysses of ignominy—covetousness, dishonesty, and fraud—

lying lips and a slanderous tongue—all that tramples under foot the laws of God and man, with all that is subversive of the best interests of men for time and eternity; are but the indices of the great wickedness that finds its place and is nurtured in the heart of man. What scenes of moral depravity present themselves to view, when we look upon the world around us! Were the being who is the perpetrator of such deeds of wickedness, to act without disguise, concealment, or restraint; what proofs would he not furnish of surpassing wickedness, and how far short of that spirit and those deeds of evil which are now found only in the abodes of the devil and the damned, would be the ordinary deeds of men! Or, if from these, we look at a different class of sins, and turn our thoughts to the neglect and rejection of the glorious gospel of the ever-blessed God; what proof do they furnish of great wickedness! Mark the lightness and unconcern with which the mass of men in Christian lands treat the claims of Christian piety. Listen to the sneers of infidelity, and to the contemptuous merriment of those who are not infidel; observe the profane ribaldry with which men regard the religion of the Son of God and its divine Author; and how convincing the proof that such persons are guilty of great wickedness. Observe too the multitudes who, while they outwardly respect the claims of this salvation, refuse to accept it, and

will not come to Jesus Christ that they might have life. Whence this aversion to that which is full of truth and grace? Why is it that men turn away from that which is so lovely, pure, glorious, that angels stoop down in admiration of its beauty and excellence? Man surely must be a strangely depraved being, thus to turn away from that which every holy and virtuous mind in the universe delights in. Sin men can practise with greediness; evil courses they can pursue; but to turn from evil, to welcome the grace that would rescue them from this bondage of iniquity and death, they have no heart. And what do these things demonstrate, but that the wickedness of man is great in the earth; that his moral tendencies are on the side of sin, and the natural current of his mind is downward, and not easily resisted?

There are also several *characteristics* of human wickedness which confirm these general views. One of these is the strength and vigor of men's evil propensities. In the emphatic language of the prophet, the heart of man is "desperately wicked." It is deeply imbedded wickedness. It grows with the growth of the intellectual and physical faculties, and strengthens with their strength. It is the master power of the soul, and rules it with despotic sway. It blinds the understanding, perverts the conscience, corrupts and bribes the memory, pollutes the imagination, and

makes the man a slave to sin. He is in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. The Scriptures speak of the strength and intensity of human wickedness in no measured terms. Our Lord told the unbelieving Jews, that "they were of their father the devil, and the lusts of their father they would do." He told them "they were serpents and a generation of vipers." Nor is the human heart, all the world over, by nature, any too good to incur this opprobrium. Paul says of the heart of every unrenewed man, that "it is enmity against God." It possesses no such mildness and inoffensiveness as men frequently flatter themselves exists. Wickedness is in its nature strong and vigorous. It is difficult to conceive of stronger principles of action, than dwell in the bosom of every unrenewed man, when once they are incited. The human heart has nothing *within itself* to suppress the most vigorous and fearful expressions. It will always express any degree of wickedness for which it discovers sufficient inducements, if not prevented by the restraining grace, or the restraining providence of God. Esau would have slain Jacob, but for this restraint. Cataline would have slaughtered Cicero and the Roman senate; Napoleon would have added to slaughtered armies still greater slaughters, had not the providence of God restrained his sword. Conspiracy upon conspiracy, well matured in the heart of man, would have been accomplished in

deeds of blood and fire, but for the restraints of a higher power. It ever has been, and still is the high prerogative of God to "restrain the wrath of man." Both good men and bad would have committed a thousand acts of wickedness where they have committed one, had not God controlled and restrained their hearts. Many an amiable and moral man who has indignantly repelled the charge that he hated God, has afterwards been brought to see that he had a heart that could hate him. Many a man who has revolted at crimes committed by his fellow-men, has afterwards found, when circumstances and motives favored the deed, that his own heart was none too good to perpetrate the same enormities. Many a man, who like the king of Israel, when the prophet disclosed his future wickedness, has exclaimed, "*Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing!*" has afterwards, like this self-deluded monarch, practised the very enormities, from the prospect of which he once shrunk with horror.

And what do these things teach us, but that there is a *strength* as well as an extent of corruption within the heart of man that is of the most alarming character. The heart of man was no worse in the days of Herod, and Pontius Pilate, and Nero, than it is now. Wicked men do not need more wicked hearts than they have, to conduct themselves just as the greatest prodigies of wickedness have done

before them. You cannot name a sin so vile, but it has been engendered in the heart of man, man's hand has perpetrated it. It is a point of easy demonstration, that men have hearts that are capable of deliberate wickedness of the highest aggravation. Nothing is too desperate for them to devise and perpetrate. Is there a sin which blinds the understanding, sears the conscience, pollutes and stupefies the senses, and ruins the soul; the heart of man has committed it. Is there a crime so great as to expose its perpetrators to ignominy, exile, and death from their fellow-men; the history of man is the history of such crimes. Is there iniquity so great that God will not forgive it either in this world, or the world to come; very often have men committed it. Are there crimes which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which have been known only to the all-seeing God? Ten thousand times ten thousand such crimes have been treasured up in the human heart. The history of the sinner's *life* would fill him with amazement and dismay; but what would be his dismay, if "the unwritten, secret history of his heart" should be disclosed? Which of us would consent to have the history of his desires and thoughts read out before the world? Never after such a disclosure would it again be doubted that the wickedness of man is great. It is a view of man's wickedness that shocks us, and

one that is almost incredible, when we say, in sober earnest, that the difference between wicked men on earth and wicked men in hell is, that here in this world of hope, and mercy, the exercises of the depraved heart are controlled and suppressed ; and there, in that world of despair and wrath, they are ungoverned and acted out. All doubt will soon vanish. The world of disembodied spirits will soon tell who among us have a heart that is desperately wicked, and are vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.

Another characteristic of man's heart consists in the *obduracy and determination of its wickedness*. We can conceive of wickedness which is to the last degree vigorous and intense; but then it may not be so unyielding and determined as to resist, and, with unconquerable obstinacy, every possible inducement to holiness. Yet, if there be a truth that is clearly taught in the Scriptures, it is that the wickedness of the human heart is such that it is insuperable by any finite power. The Scriptures represent it as a "heart of stone." They affirm that the wicked are "hard-hearted," and "stout-hearted and far from righteousness." They do indeed speak of the subjugation of its obstinacy and stoutness; but it is not by the might, nor power of man. They speak of its voluntary and cheerful surrender to Jesus Christ, but it is by the "exceeding greatness of

that power which God wrought when he raised him from the dead." They speak of its submitting to God; but it is only when made willing and in the day of divine power. Deep is the shadowing here given of the human character. What exceeding sinfulness, and what strange and unaccountable *wilfulness* of depravity is that which is open to no successful attack, till subdued by Almighty grace! Instruct a wicked man in all the principles of revealed religion; set before his mind the unreasonableness of his conduct; furnish him with every conceivable consideration to diminish the extent or weaken the vigor of his iniquity: and it is all to no effect. No light of truth will subdue his determined heart; the more he sees and knows, the more vigorously does he resist and rebel. Set before him the infinite authority of the God he has provoked; and he shall tremble under the weight of it, but he will not turn and live. Allure him by the divine goodness and mercy; and the goodness of God does not lead him to repentance. Set before him the fulness and all-sufficiency of the mighty Saviour, the promises and invitations of his gospel, and the glories of God's right hand; and no tenderness of Jesus's love, no hope of pardon, no fellowship of the saints, or joys of heaven, will allure his obdurate heart. It has a determination of purpose which nothing earthly can change. Such is his obdu-

racy, that he cannot come to Christ, unless the Father draw him. Probe his conscience, and make him tremble; unman his fortitude, and make him weep, you may; you may pour upon his ear that “trump of horror” that will by-and-bye awake the dead; you may draw aside the veil of eternity, and show him that hell is naked before him, and that destruction hath no covering; and though he may be awakened, and may cry out in agony, yet is there nothing in all the terrors of the pit that loosens his bonds, or that can induce him to break off his iniquities by righteousness, and his transgressions by turning to God. He is chained to his purpose by a spirit of desperation; and the more you urge him by considerations the most tender and the most fearful, the more does his obstinacy keep pace with all the difficulties you throw in his way. Even when the minds of the wicked are awake to the instructions of God’s word, and to the solemn and affecting expostulations of his providence, they will stand and resist the force of the truth and the obligations of duty, and contend with their Maker to the last. Nay, when the Eternal Spirit is striving with them; when he opens their eyes to see their danger, and awakens their consciences to feel their guilt; when he makes them feel that they are in the broad way that leads to death, and that they must repent and believe the gospel, or perish: they still cleave

to their wickedness, and had rather perish than repent and believe the gospel. It is then their carnal mind rises in most sensible and determined hostility to God; their iniquity revives, and they sin faster and stronger than ever. The more light and convictions are thrown upon their minds, the more unyielding do their hearts become. The Scriptures set this in a very strong light when they say, "Though thou bray a fool in a mortar, among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." If omnipotent grace does not interpose, they persist in their obduracy.

Another feature in this early description of human wickedness is, THAT IT IS PURE AND UNMINGLED WICKEDNESS. That sin to no small extent is one of the distinctive properties of the human race, is a fact too obvious to be called in question. Those who hold the most loose opinions of human depravity, do not deny that "*all* have sinned and come short of the glory of God." But whether man is by nature a totally depraved being; and whether his wickedness is such as to be without any mixture of holiness, is a question which has ever divided the unevangelical from the evangelical world. That some are worse than others; that no man is as bad as he is capable of being, and as he will be in future and more matured stages of his wickedness, are positions we

are not disposed to controvert ; nor is it necessary to controvert them in order to maintain the doctrine of total depravity. That doctrine we understand to be, that every man is by nature destitute of holiness, and that whatever in his nature or conduct is capable of being compared with the law of God, is positively sinful. And is not this the view of the human character which is given in the Scriptures ? What is the meaning of the declaration, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth ; and that *every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*" If *every* imagination of the thoughts of his heart is evil, what is there in his heart that is not evil ? If this evil is *continual*, and without interruption, where is there any room for one right principle, emotion, or act ? Elsewhere, we are instructed that "the heart of the sons of men is *full* of evil, and madness is in their heart." What is there good in the heart that is *full of evil* ? "There is none righteous," saith the Apostle, "no, not one ; there is none that *doeth good*, no, not one." This Apostle himself, even before his conversion, was a man of blameless outward deportment, and even a rigid and sever• religionist ; afterward, he was one of the most self-denying and devoted servants of God the world has seen ; yet he says of himself, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh,—my unrenewed

mind,—there dwelleth *no good thing.*" The import of these and similar declarations is, that all the moral dispositions and exercises of man's heart, until it is renewed by the Spirit of God, are sinful. No matter how wise and accomplished men may be; no matter how worthy of confidence in their intercourse with their fellow-men; no matter how amiable and mild in their natural dispositions; if unrenewed, their hearts are the seat of unmixed wickedness, and they are altogether inclined to evil. Their thoughts are sinful; their desires, their purposes and motives are sinful; whatever passes through their minds, of which the law of God takes cognizance, is evil and not good, disobedience and not obedience. And thus their whole heart is sinful. All that appertains to it is unholy and wrong. The exterior may be fair, but there is nothing but moral corruption within. There is a fulness of iniquity, which, though it flow not forth in the filth and scum of wickedness, sends forth streams that are immingled with no good thing. There is no cessation in the streams, and there is no purity. Their "inward thought is very wickedness." They may please men, and be the objects of their admiration and applause; but so long as they are in the flesh, "they cannot please God." They are destitute of everything which God requires and approves. And hence the Scriptures so familiarly represent

them as "*dead* in sin ;" not diseased merely, but dead ; not dead to the claims and obligations of holiness, but dead *in sin*. And hence, in enforcing this truth, the Scriptures also so familiarly represent it as necessary that they should be "born again," and "pass from death unto life," before the first pulse of spiritual life, or true holiness, throbs within their bosoms. Such men sin as constantly as they act ; the "ploughing of the wicked is sin," because it comes from so sinful a heart. They sin as constantly as they think ; nor can the amount of their iniquity be estimated without a due estimate of the unnumbered thoughts and emotions of wickedness that pass with such amazing rapidity through their minds. There is not a single claim of God or of his truth, of his purposes or his government, of his law or his gospel, of what he is, has done, or will perform, toward which the state of their hearts is not just the opposite of what he requires. Such is the extent and universality of their wickedness.

Still another fact to which this first definition of human wickedness bears witness is, THAT WHAT IS THERE AFFIRMED OF ONE AGE OF THE WORLD IS TRUE OF MAN EVERYWHERE AND IN ALL AGES. The objection that this description of human wickedness is applicable only to a very corrupt age, and a very degenerate race, is more plausible than solid. Where is the evidence that

human nature is essentially changed from the days of Noah to the present hour? The language of the sacred historian is certainly strong and comprehensive. It is the wickedness of *man* of which he speaks; they are the imaginations of the thoughts of *man's* heart, wherever he is found, until he is renewed by the grace of God. When you look at the character of the antediluvian world, and compare it with the character of subsequent ages, under the same moral culture, do you not perceive that it is the true index of fallen humanity all over the world? You inspect the conduct of such men as Nimrod, Pharaoh, Jeroboam, Manasseh, and Ahab; and though you see human nature in some of its worst forms, you only see what is in the heart of man. It is the eagle allured by the scent of prey; and "where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." You look into the pages of history, and read the achievements of ambition, the plots of treachery, the deeds of wrong and violence, of lust and blood; and what do you survey, if not the character of *man*? You observe the human character in the great marts of business; you advert to places and scenes where wicked men are congregated in large masses; you traverse the streets of London, or Paris, or Lisbon, or Stockholm, or Constantinople, where the habits are formed under influ-

ences not the most favorable to moral virtue; and what do we observe if not the character of man? If you ask the merchant and the ship-owner what views they have formed of human nature; it might call up the blush of shame upon their face to give an honest answer. If you inquire of the judge on the bench, or the barrister at the bar, and who have more or better opportunities of scrutinizing the characters of men, they will tell you that there is very little sterling virtue in the world. The melancholy fact is, that those who know the most of mankind, in all countries, in all climates, and under all circumstances, know the most of human wickedness, and have the most humiliating impressions of human depravity. Nor can the universal fact be accounted for, that the old are so much more suspicious than the young, but that the more men themselves know of men, the more are they convinced that they are not trustworthy. If it be still said, that this is unfair and disingenuous reasoning, we demand again, where is the unfairness? If you reply, it is not true that all men are thus wicked; we reply, we do not affirm that they are so; and only affirm that such examples indicate *what is in man*, and that left to himself, he is no better than this. We do not, as it is slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say, assert that the character of the race is to be decided by its *prisons*; but

this we say, that the hearts of the best of men are, by nature, no better than the hearts of the worst of men. If the conduct of one wicked man is not so bad as the conduct of another, or if in any of its forms it differs from that of others; it is not because there is naturally any radical difference in their hearts, but because their character is formed under different exterior influences. All have not the same capacity for wickedness; nor the same strength of appetite and passions; nor the same opportunities of sinning; nor the same temptations and inducements. Man is substantially the same being everywhere; under the same training and motives, his heart will act itself out much in the same way. The stream of corruption without never rises higher than the fountain of corruption within. The reason why some men are good and some are bad, is that the difference is made by the grace of God. The reason why some wicked men are more wicked than others, and the reason why the same men are more wicked at some times than at others, is that their minds are not so vigorous at one time as at another, and they are impelled by stronger considerations. Their wickedness is always as great as the state of their minds and their outward condition will allow, because "the imagination of the thoughts of their heart is evil, only evil continually."

With this view of human wickedness, what must

be our reflections? What everlasting unworthiness of all good, and what everlasting desert of evil are befitting us *as men*! What an aggregate of wickedness is treasured up against the man whose iniquity is unpardoned! If the reader can number the sands on the shore, or weigh the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance, then can he estimate his own ill-desert. How deep the wickedness in the heart of man; how deep the abyss of misery into which he deserves to fall! "Infinite upon infinite" scarcely fathoms these depths. All the plagues that are written in God's book do not adequately measure the desperate wickedness of the human heart.

Why is it, then, that so many cry, peace! peace! but that the heart of man is "deceitful above all things." Men are strangely blind to their own character. How true it is, that "he that trusteth to his own heart is a fool!" Memory is treacherous; but the heart is more treacherous. The imagination is full of lying vanities; but the heart is a greater liar even than the imagination. It is made up of deception, because it is made up of wickedness. It deceives others and it deceives itself. It practises its deceptions with marvellous and dire success, overreaching and outrunning its own original intentions of wickedness, breaking its promises and vows, and hurrying men down the vortex of their own passions when they

thought the surface was equable and smooth. It is no rare occurrence for them to confess that they err in judgment, and that their outward conduct is faulty; but very rarely are they convinced that the more radical error is error at heart. It is surprising to see how soon the heart expresses its deceitfulness, and at what an early age it is acted out. On almost every other subject, except those which are religious and moral, a little child, unless it has been tampered with, is ingenuous and honest. But on this whole class of subjects, no sooner is the conscience awake, than the heart proves a traitor. It is most ingeniously deceitful, and has at its command all the arts of palliation, apology, quibbling, and tergiversation which are discoverable in more matured minds. There is nothing more observable in wicked men, and there is nothing of which good men more complain, than the deceitfulness of their hearts. Deceit is one of the deep-seated characteristics of the heart of man, and adheres to him with indomitable pertinacity; it sloughs off even from the moral constitution of good men, with the last excrescences of the body of sin and death.

It is a marvel in the view of some, that men should be often so agitated and distressed by a sense of their wickedness. But why should any marvel at a fact so easily accounted for? What more is necessary in order to fill the mind with

anxiety and distress, than for any man to "know the plague of his own heart!" Let the most thoughtless man in the world see this, and he cannot help feeling that he has a burden too great for him to bear. His own conscience unites with the truth of the Bible in assuring him that the wrath of God abideth on him; that he is a dying man, and must soon appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; and that it is but the recompense due to his sins, if he escape not the damnation of hell. The marvel is, that there should be an unconverted man in the world, who is not pricked in his heart, and does not cry out, with the alarmed thousands on the day of Pentecost, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" O this heart of wickedness! this heart of adamant! What must eternity be to a man who has such a heart!

This is no false alarm which I am sounding. No man can go into eternity with such a heart and be safe. He must become an altered man, or be lost. "Verily, verily I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Human wickedness does not change itself; it is never so wise, nor so well balanced, nor is it ever so sorely pressed, and in such a state of suspense, as to alter its own course. No, it is an iron despotism which omnipotence must break. Such a man stands on slippery places. Ministers may preach to him; Christians may pray for him; but

he must have other helpers, and find refuge in him who “ hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.”

Here lies all our hope for lost and ruined man. Time and opportunity will fit them for perdition ; infinite grace alone can overcome this heart of sin, and fit them for the joys of God’s right hand. Nor may any man quarrel with this truth, until he finds he can be saved without it. Nor may he make it a refuge of lies, and plead it as an excuse for not breaking off his iniquity by righteousness, and his transgressions by turning to God. Flee I pray you from the delusion of a heart that would thus deceive you to your own undoing.

## CHAPTER XX.

### The First Announced Withdrawment of the Spirit.

God's gracious purpose of saving sinners is "through sanctification of *the Spirit* and belief of the truth." The character and work of this divine agent, though by no means so clearly in the Old Testament as in the New, are yet clearly revealed. When, just before the flood, the Lord said, "My *Spirit* shall not always strive with man," he teaches us, that there is such an agent; that he strives with men; and that he shall not strive always.

The Spirit of God possesses *a distinct and personal existence*. Notwithstanding the modern refinements of some few Trinitarian writers, we still hold to a personal distinction in the Godhead; it is not a mere nominal distinction, to which the Scriptures refer, when they speak of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. There are three equally distinct and divine persons in the one God; yet,

mysterious truth, they are “the same in substance, equal in power and glory.” They are distinct without being separate; just as the faculties of the human mind are distinct, without being separate faculties. And they are inseparably united in one God, just as the faculties of the human mind are inseparably united in one intellectual and moral existence. Nor can we understand the wondrous method of redemption which distinguishes Christianity from all other religions, without receiving this truth.

There are those who teach that the Holy Spirit is God acting in a distinct office; this was the belief of Sabellius of the third century, and the heresy which was condemned by the council of Constantine. There are those who teach that He derives his existence from the Father and the Son; such is the Arian heresy; it sprang up in the church of Alexandria in the early part of the fourth century, and was condemned both by the council of Alexandria and the council of Nice. The Socinians and modern Unitarians teach that the Holy Ghost is not a person, but a mere divine energy, or influence, an attribute of the Deity, and not himself divine.

It is one of the peculiarities of Christianity, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three distinct, inseparable persons in one God. The Spirit of God is not a mere influence, power, or emanation

of the Deity ; but an intelligent Person, perceiving, thinking, choosing, acting. Personal properties, personal characteristics, personal works, are attributed to him.

'The Scriptures instruct us that he possesses *intelligence* : "The Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God." He possesses *will and choice* : "The Spirit, dividing to every man, as he will." He possesses *power* : "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit." He *teaches* and *dictates* : "He shall teach you all things;" it is "not you that speak, but the Holy Ghost." He *commands, commissions, and sends forth* : "The Spirit said, Arise, for I have sent them;" being "sent by the Holy Ghost, they departed." He is called the *Sanctifier*, the *Witness*, the *Comforter*. If such personal properties and acts do not distinguish him from a mere principle, or influence, and imply personal agency, we know not how we are to ascertain the personality of God himself. It is not in the embellished style of poetry and rhetoric, that these properties are ascribed to him ; it is in the language of didactic discourse and of historical records ; and some of it in the more precise language of grant and covenant. A mere emanation, or quality, cannot be said to create, to see, to search, to receive, to speak, to intimate his mind and will. A plain, unlettered man, whose mind has not been perverted by the subtleties of error,

must rise from an impartial view of the Scriptures with the conviction that the Spirit of God is a living agent, designing and working with consciousness, will, and power.

This fact, if we mistake not, goes far toward proving *his true and proper divinity*. The Scriptures also familiarly appropriate to him the *true and proper names* of the Deity. He is called *the God of Israel, the Rock of Israel*; and Christians are spoken of as “*the Temple of God*,” because “*the Spirit of God dwelleth in them* ;” the inhabitant is a divine Person. We are instructed that, to “*lie unto the Holy Ghost*” is not to “*lie unto men, but unto God*.” The unpardonable sin is committed against the Holy Ghost. The prophet Isaiah informs us, that “*he heard the voice of the Lord*” speaking to him; and in the Acts of the Apostles, the writer affirms that the Person thus addressing the prophet was *the Holy Ghost*. “*Well spake the Holy Ghost, by Esaias the prophet.*” In the prophecies of Ezekiel, the writer speaks of a time and place where “*the hand of the Lord* fell upon him ;” and then immediately afterward he declares, “*The Spirit lifted me up* ;” while in the course of his narrative, we find the same Spirit attending the prophet, and the prophet invoking him as the *Lord God*. In the book of Deuteronomy, it is affirmed that “*Jehovah alone did lead his people* ;” while the prophet Isaiah,

referring to the same fact, declares, the “*Holy Spirit* led them.” In the Old Testament it is written, “If there be a prophet among you, I, *Jehovah*, will make myself known to him;” and in the New Testament it is declared, that “holy men of old spake as they were moved by the *Holy Ghost*.”

The Scriptures also ascribe to the Spirit the essential attributes of the Deity. He is called the *eternal* Spirit—the *omniscient* Spirit—the *omnipresent* Spirit—the *Spirit of power*; while the mighty signs and wonders which accompanied the introduction of Christianity, are declared to have been wrought “by the power of the Spirit of God.” What created being possesses such attributes as these?

Religious worship is also paid to the Spirit in the formula of Christian baptism, and in the apostolic benediction. Of the same import also is that expressive benediction in the Apocalypse, “Grace be unto you from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the *seven spirits which are before the throne*, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful and true Witness!” Here in the same act of worship with the self-existent, eternal, and unchangeable Jehovah, and with the divine and co-equal Son, is associated “the seven spirits which are before the throne,” denoting the *perfection* and fulness of the Spirit’s gifts and operations, as the

Fountain of life, grace, and peace, and as one with the Father and the Son. No created spirit would have been thus associated as one with him who is God over all, blessed for evermore.

No such representations could have been made concerning the Holy Spirit, if he were not truly and properly God. Nor may we forget that all the considerations in proof of the doctrine of the Trinity furnish concurrent demonstration of the divinity of the Spirit; and that whatever evidence is furnished of a plurality of persons in the God-head bears directly upon the fact, that the Spirit is "the same in substance, and equal in power and glory" with the Father and the Son.

When the Scriptures teach us that God's Spirit strives with men, they teach us that *he sustains an important office in the work of redemption*. The second person in the adorable Trinity sustains a special and peculiar office in this great work, which was to become incarnate and suffer and die on the cross to make an atonement for the sins of men, to pass into the heavens, and as a merciful and faithful High Priest ever-living to make intercession for us. The peculiar province of the Spirit is the *human mind*; they are his internal operations upon the soul of man by which he is chiefly known and honored.

When the promise of the Holy Spirit was given by the Saviour to the apostles, it was a

promise they did not fully understand. He was to prepare them for their great work of establishing and diffusing Christianity in the earth. He was to compensate them for the departure and absence of their adored Master; to take the place of his personal presence, and more than supply the comforts and consolations which they had been wont to receive immediately from *him*. Nor was this promised blessing limited to the apostles; it was to affect the state of the world. It was not to give them wealth, honor, or dominion; but to "take of the things that are Christ's, and show them unto men." It was to be a *copious* blessing; the early Christians were to be baptized with it; and it was to come upon them like the dew of Hermon, and like the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion. It was to fall as the rain upon the parched wilderness, to be poured out like floods that water the earth, cleansing it from its filthiness, and making its sterile soil like a fertile garden. It was to be a *permanent* blessing, a fountain of living waters, that should never be exhausted.

Facts tell us what it was; and that the promise of it was worthy of being called by the Saviour himself, "The promise of my Father." It was like God, and worthy of God. The fulfilment of it gave birth to a series of events which continued through the apostolic age; which con-

tinue to the present day; which will continue to the end of time, and the glorious effects of which will be fully realized only in the coming eternity. Ages, places, churches, and men on whom the Spirit descends, are the marked ages in the history of time, the distinguished spots on the face of our globe, the favored individuals of our race. He is emphatically the inward witness, that God manifest in the flesh, having made propitiation by the blood of his cross, rose from the dead, ascended up on high, and lives to send down that which his people see, hear, and feel. He ever has done, and still performs what no miracles can accomplish, and that which can be accomplished by no force of evidence, no light of truth, and no power of moral suasion. He gives repentance unto life. He makes men see, and feel, and confess their vileness, and look to the despised and crucified One for pardon and life; so that the Saviour they once despised, they now confide in; truths they once hated, they now love; instructions they once scoffed at, they now obey. They are called from darkness to light; they have passed from death unto life; they have turned from the power of Satan to the living God, by the greater power of the Spirit.

The regard which the Spirit of God claims arises principally from what he *performs*. He does not claim honor without deserving it. The

garlands upon his brow are unfading, because they are formed of deeds of power and grace, which none but the God of omnipotent power and love can perform. The fact is sometimes overlooked that he does not so much *assert* his honors, as prove and demonstrate them. It is written of him, and they are memorable words, that "He shall not speak of himself." Yet what he refrains from uttering, he is mighty to achieve. It is when he arrests the understanding, penetrates the conscience, takes away the heart of stone and gives a heart of flesh, and fills the soul with the love of God; that he appears in his godlike prerogatives. It is when he takes the feet of the conscience and law-smitten sinner from the horrible pit and the miry clay, and sets them upon a rock, and puts a new song into his mouth, that he constrains even the unbelieving world to say, "Behold what hath God wrought!" It is when he deigns to draw near to men and hold communion with them; when he fills the heart with his grace, and the sanctuary with his presence, and there "makes the place of his feet glorious," that the most unthinking and fearless say, "How awful is this place; this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" In the revelations he has made of himself in the Scriptures, he is the least prominent of the three sacred Persons in the ever-blessed and adorable Trinity; while in the pro-

gressive accomplishment of his gracious purposes, he, with them, is decked with light as with a garment, and arrayed in majesty and excellency. Our Lord told the Jews, that "*he* had greater witness" than that which was furnished either by the testimony of the Old Testament Scriptures, or that of his illustrious forerunner. "The *works* which the Father hath given me to do, these same works that I do, bear witness of me. If ye believe not me, believe me for the works' sake." The *works* of the Spirit of God speak for him, and will be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. A creature might as well commission the sun to rise, and appoint the place of his going down, as perform these works of the wonder-working Spirit. He speaks and it is done, he commands and it stands fast. Obstacles disappear at his coming, and opposition melts away. He touches the hills and they smoke ; the mountains, and they are moved ; the hard and granite hearts of men, and they become hearts of flesh. These acts of his power are *accumulative*, and destined to become more splendid and resplendent. He has but just entered on his career of wonders. His mighty arm has scarcely yet been made bare ; his still, small voice scarcely been heard ; his glory has been sometimes eclipsed, and more often beheld only in dim retirement, compared with those exhibitions of it which will hereafter overlay the

earth, and with which he will one day be encircled.

It is not any retired department in the work of redemption which he occupies ; his honors are won in the very front of the great moral contest which is yet to be carried on in this revolted world. He has come to our dark and sinful world on the kindest errand, and must be duly honored. The Apostle speaks of “the *love* of the Spirit ;” and how beautiful a thought is it in its relations to what he performs. How wondrous, how free and sovereign that love in his operations on the heart ! How excellent is it in enlightening the dark mind, convincing the conscience, renewing the will, revealing Christ to the soul, comforting it, and enabling it to joy in God ! How condescending is it, dwelling in the heart as his temple, assisting in prayer, sealing to the day of redemption, invigorating for duty, changing from glory to glory, and becoming the earnest of the eternal inheritance ! How sweet are its fruits, and in what a cold and unfriendly soil are they cultivated ! And what will be its issues, when the soul is filled with all the fulness of God ! O for a deeper sense of the *love* of the Spirit !

We would fain magnify the work of God’s Spirit. He is a jealous God ; he knows his own worthiness. His sacred ministrations constitute the last dispensation of grace, and the last and most significant

interposition by which the God who is invisible brings himself to the view of men. Never are the divine existence, the divine power, the divine justice, mercy, forbearance, sovereignty, faithfulness, and glory so truly seen and acknowledged, and so deeply felt, as when he takes of these things, shining as they do in the face of Jesus Christ, and shows them to the minds and hearts of men. The great work *for* his people has been effected by God the Son; the great work *in* them is to be effected by God the Spirit. He now descends and fills the chasm made by the Saviour's absence, that the church may not be left without a Sanctifier, nor the world without the Deity. His presence is not confined to time and place. He dwells with the millions of his people, and he never utterly departs from them. "Whither shall we go from his Spirit, and whither shall we flee from his presence?" Is he not everywhere in this guilty world, if it be only to restrain the wrath of man? Most truly will he yet fill the whole earth with his glory. He will yet bow his heavens and come down; the mountains shall flow down at his presence. Revival shall succeed revival, and these effusions of mercy shall be as when the heavens drop down righteousness, and the earth opens and brings forth salvation.

But while the Spirit of God thus strives, there are those with whom *he will not strive always.*

The Scriptures speak of resisting, and grieving, and quenching the Holy Spirit. Not a few are alarmed and convinced of sin, who resist these inward operations, and at last perish. That deep impression of personal sinfulness, those fearful apprehensions of the displeasure of a holy God, that humbling consciousness of dependence and inexcusableness which are often felt by those who are not Christians, constitute a state of mind which is in every view solemn and affecting. Yet is it often thrown off and dismissed. Men drop the subject and resist the Spirit. They turn back like the dog to his vomit, and like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

If you ask how they do this, I answer, some do it by avoiding the external duties of religion ; and they do it on purpose to prevent, or destroy serious impressions. Others do it by thinking lightly and speaking lightly of the Spirit himself, and of the work he performs ; and they do it with the view of resisting his influences, and fortifying their own minds against them. Some do it, by shunning the society of the inquiring and anxious ; and it is for the purpose of keeping their own minds from being thrown into deeper anxiety and distress. Some do it by murmuring against God, and quarrelling with his truth ; and thus they counteract the merciful design of the Spirit, who would otherwise make the truth the power of God to salvation.

Some do it by dissipating their minds by worldly cares and amusements. Most successfully do they grieve the Spirit thus; and by thus yielding to the incessant importunity of the world, kill their convictions. They grieve God's Spirit by all their self-justifying pleas, by all their delay to accept offered mercy, and by all their halting between two opinions.

There are not many sins greater than thus resisting the Spirit. There are not many in which men sin so *directly* against God; because when his Spirit strives with them, God is immediately before their minds. There are not many in which they sin so directly against his authority; because his Spirit brings the commandment home. There are not many in which they sin so directly against their own consciences; because their conscience is then broad awake. There are not many in which they so practically justify all their other sins; because their sins are then set in order before them, and the single question is presented to their minds, whether they will "leave their sins and go to heaven, or have their sins and go to hell." Nor are there many sins by which they so violate their own resolutions, vows and prayers; and in defiance of them all, force themselves back to stupidity and darkness. Nor are there any by which they so resist the strongest motives to repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ. There

is every motive, and every combination of motives resisted, when men resist the Holy Ghost.

And because he is thus resisted, he no longer strives. He sees the sinner is growing worse and worse, and leaves him to his own chosen way. Some he abandons sooner than others, and some he strives with long. But when he ceases to strive, the fate of the resisting is the doom of the reprobate. He will not strive always, because there is a limit beyond which his long-suffering may not be extended; because it is of no use; because it is of disservice to the sinner to keep up this sharp controversy with God; because his iniquity is already full, and justice will exact its full recompense at another day.

Thus it was with the old world. The Spirit was withdrawn, and the flood came and swept them all away. They did not know when he departed; nor did they believe that he was in earnest in his threatenings. All flesh had corrupted his way on the earth, and God's patience was exhausted. Men were given up of God, and had nothing to contend with in establishing one universal empire of infidelity and crime. There were giants in the earth in those days; men who had boldly apostatized from the true religion; men of rapine and blood; mighty men, and men of renown; men of great courage and great wickedness. They had become a sensual and brutalized

race. Blasphemy and impiety in every form, injury and wrong in all their excesses, degrading and diabolical passions, had prepared them for overwhelming wrath. Yet because God's Spirit no longer strived with them, they were thoughtless and unconcerned; frivolous and immersed in the world. They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away.

As it was then, so is it now. Those from whom God's Spirit is withdrawn may read their own history in the overthrow of that abandoned and ungodly generation. They may return to their thoughtlessness, and mingle with the sons and daughters of pleasure in all the joys this world can give. Not another pang of conviction may shoot through their obdurate bosoms, and not another solemn thought ever cast a shade upon their brow. But it is the maniac joy that shouts on the brink of a precipice. It will cost them little effort to rush on in their mad career. Days of gladness will roll over their heads as placidly as though no thunder was gathering in the heavens, and no fountains of the great deep were about to be broken up. Nothing moves them, because God's Spirit has ceased to strive. Those who listened to the counsels of heavenly wisdom, have entered into the ark, and he who openeth

and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth, has "shut them in." From sea to sea, and from shore to shore, he who holds the winds in his fists and the waters as in the hollow of his hand, bars the fountains of his deep anger until they are housed from the storm. But there is no escape for those who have vexed and grieved the Holy Spirit. Sudden destruction cometh upon them, like the waters of the flood, when the roaring of its waters proclaimed how wide the desolation, how pitiless its empire.

. When God sent his prophet to premonish the idolatrous ten tribes of his approaching judgments, he uttered the emphatic words, "Woe also to them, when I depart from them!" Ministers may preach then; providences may alarm and invite; but it is all in vain. The streams of mercy, though never dry, flow not through this forsaken heritage. Instead of the beauty and richness of spring, there are the chill blasts and sterility of winter. Every cloud is sealed up, and Zion's mountains, and even her once verdant plains, are covered with snows. Her ways are mournful, "because few come to her solemn feasts." And while this thoughtlessness and obduracy distinguish the men of the world, God's people languish and are ready to die. Few enjoy the light of God's countenance, while many walk in darkness. The house of God and the circles of prayer are strangely

deserted; while that mutual love and fellowship and united effort for the salvation of men, in which they once so greatly delighted, are intermitted and forgotten. A deathlike slumber pervades the church. Darkness covers her, and she sits in sack-cloth. Languor and lethargy paralyze her courage, and she sinks in despondency.

And then it is that there are such mournful excesses in wickedness; and "iniquity abounds," because "the love of many waxes cold." It is not within the hallowed sphere of the Spirit's influence that the great adversary most successfully allures. Gross vice is then frowned out of countenance. The places of vain amusement and dissipation are deserted for the place of prayer, and the careless sinner, the cold-hearted scoffer, and it may be the stubborn infidel may be found in his closet and on his knees. There is a majestic awfulness in these footsteps of the King of Zion when he walks amid the golden candlesticks. When his Spirit ceases to strive, these restraints are withdrawn. Wicked men then sin with boldness; vice, once restrained, like an impetuous river, returns to its own channel with a violence only augmented by the temporary impediment thrown in its way. Immorality stalks abroad at noon-day, and infidelity reviles and blasphemers. Men glory in their shame, and with the sinners of other times, say, "The Lord shall

not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.” And then it is that men and communities ripen fast for destruction. They become like lands that are burnt over and “given to salt;” the waters of the sanctuary never visit them; every tree, and plant, and shrub withers, and is cut down.

Does it not then become all classes of men—ministers and people, parents and children, good men and bad—to prize more highly the presence of God’s Spirit? Not more certainly was the coming of Christ the great promise to the saints of the Old Testament, than the outpouring of the Spirit is the great promise to the Christian dispensation. Most truly may we say, that the Holy Spirit is the hope of the world. “Upon the land of my people shall come up briers and thorns; yea upon all the houses of the joyous city, until the Spirit be poured from on high.”

Who *feels the need* of this sacred influence? Who is driven from every other resource and helper, to this only refuge? Who abjures all reliance on an arm of flesh, and feels that his help must come from God?

Who *desires* this influence? Who is so prepared for it, that it would be no disappointment to him, should the Spirit of God come and search Jerusalem as with candles; and no grief of heart to him should he come with his fan in his hand and thoroughly purge his floor? Who can make him wel-

come, when he comes to derange their ambitious plans, to disturb their worldly joys, and demand their thoughts, their time, their efforts, and their hearts for the things that are not seen and are eternal? Who can enjoy his presence, should he build up Zion, and appear in his glory?

Who truly *seeks and prays* for this influence? It is not an unsolicited good. It was not on the day of Pentecost; nor is it ever. O, where are the men of prayer, who stir themselves up to take hold on God? God gives his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Who *asks* him? In the secret of his closet, amid the sacredness of his domestic altar, amid the sweetness of Christian fellowship, who asks him? Who asks him humbly, fervently, importunately? Who asks the more importunately, because he is for a time denied? Who wrestles with the angel of the covenant, and to the forbidding words "Let me go," replies with Jacob, "No, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me?"

And who *grieves and resists* this Holy Ghost? Who shuts his eyes when the finger of God thus opens them? Who, when God speaks thus audibly, stops his ear? Who, when God touches his conscience, hardens it to adamant, and "always resists the Holy Ghost?" Though he comes down from his high abode to make their bodies temples for himself to dwell in; though he would restore their polluted minds to the image of their

Maker ; though he would make them the servants and children of God ; though he would give them all the blessings of Jesus' love, and fit them for the residence, the employments, the blessedness of saints and seraphs before the throne ; yet they resist him. Others have done so before them, and have gone to their last account. And where are they now ; while those with whom he still strives occupy this world of hope, have their place in his sanctuary, and so near the mercy-seat ?

Yet did the God, thus long-suffering and gracious, early say, " My Spirit shall not always strive with man." This is among the first lessons he ever gave to the world. Men may resist him, and he may depart. They may resist him, and never hear his voice again, till the last trumpet calls them to the judgment.

With what unutterable tenderness did the Psalmist once say, " Take not thy Holy Spirit from me !" Why should others be brought into the kingdom of God, and the reader be left out ? Why should others die in peace, and his death-bed be curtained with gloom and despair ? Why shall others, on the morning of the resurrection, rise to glory, honor, immortality, and *he* rise to shame and everlasting contempt ? And when the wicked shall be severed from among the just, and the Lord of the harvest shall gather the wheat into his garner, and burn up the chaff with un-

quenchable fire; why should the reader mourn at the last, and take up that bitter lamentation, "The harvest is past, and the summer is ended and I am not saved!"

## CHAPTER XXI.

### *The First National Curse.*

WE have reason to believe, from no doubtful intimations, that the excessive corruption of the age before the Deluge was, in no small degree, to be attributed to the debased and vitiated state of the social relations. When, after the flood, the population of this earth was confined to a single family, and the world was about to start afresh in its great career, it was the special care of its great Lawgiver to throw around these relations the guardianship of his own almighty providence. And he did so, by inculcating a most affecting lesson, and one that sends its solemn tones of admonition to the remotest generations of men.

The narrative is brief, and though we have adverted to it before, we will transcribe it at length. “And the sons of Noah, that went forth from the ark, were Shem, Ham, and Japheth ; and Ham is the father of Canaan. These are the three sons of Noah ; and of them was the whole earth over-

spread. And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard ; and he drank of the wine, and was drunken ; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father ; and their faces were backward and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, *Cursed be Canaan* ; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, *Blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant.* God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem ; and Canaan shall be his servant."

It is not necessary for our purpose, to animadvert on the scurrility of infidels in regard to the conduct of Noah ; nor is it any part of our design to justify or palliate that conduct. When he awoke from his wine, he was directed by God to testify the divine disapprobation of the unfilial spirit and deportment of *Ham* by pronouncing a *curse* upon him and his posterity ; while by the same direction he pronounced a *blessing* upon *Shem and Japheth*, and their descendants. *Ham* saw his father's nakedness, and went and proclaimed it ; and

God cursed him, and gave the curse a tremendous sweep through unknown ages of time. *Shem* and *Japheth* turned from it, refused to look at the mournful spectacle of a father's shame, covered it up from the eyes of men; and God *blessed* them, and made them their brother's master. Three times is this blessing and this curse repeated; and most abundantly has both the promise and the curse been fulfilled.

*Shem* is the first named in the sacred narrative, in this act of filial honor; and his descendants were eminently the favored race. He was the progenitor of the wide-spread Hebrew nation—a people renowned in literature, in arts, in arms, in wealth and intelligence—a people that once possessed power—a people from whom the Saviour of men was descended, and who were the selected depositary and dispensers of divine truth to all the nations of the earth—a people, who, notwithstanding their present abjectness and dispersion, hold the purse-strings of the world, and are destined to resume their former piety and greatness. “Salvation is of the Jews.” What has not the race of *Shem* performed in the great work of *covering* the shame of men!

*Japheth*, who was the prompt auxiliary in this work of filial honor, was to be enlarged: he was “to dwell in the tents of *Shem*.” The great nations of the earth, both of ancient and modern

times, are either the descendants of Japheth, or the descendants of the extensively mingled races of Shem and Ham, not in the line of Canaan. The superiority of Europe over other parts of the earth is the fulfilment of this promise.

*Ham* was to be the “servant of servants to his brethren.” His descendants, *in the line of Canaan*, were the accursed race. Other portions of his posterity were a more favored people; but the descendants of Canaan were under the curse.

It is not an easy matter, in the present age of the world, to define, with precision, the line which separates the families of Japheth from all the branches of the family of Shem. But, considering the nature of the subject, it is less difficult to point out the difference between the descendants of Canaan and the other two races. It is less difficult in a geographical view, if we patiently follow out the intimations of the sacred historian in the tenth chapter of the book of Genesis. And it is less difficult in a physiological view. As one of the three integral parts of the human family, they have for the most part been kept distinct from the rest of mankind. So far as my own inquiries have been extended, they have never been able to make any independent settlement in Europe. From the operation of causes, the consideration of which is foreign to our present purpose, they form the dark-colored race, the negro family. On them the curse

rests ; they were to be the “servant of servants” to the other races. And the curse has been executed. As early as the days of Joshua, one of the tribes—the Gibeonites—who by craft obtained a league with their conqueror, was condemned to perpetual servitude, and he made them “hewers of wood and drawers of water” to the people of Israel. It is a fact, I believe, well ascertained, that those of these seven nations who were not extirpated by Joshua, were ultimately driven into Africa. What their history has been since, many a dark page, depicting in glowing colors their own cupidity and cruelty, as well as the cruelty and cupidity of the other races, has disclosed. It is a tale of “mourning, lamentation, and woe.” They have been scattered over the earth ; they are found among ourselves ; but whether as slaves or as hired servants, whether educated or uneducated, they are, as a race, “hewers of wood and drawers of water.”

Writers on the natural history of man, have perplexed themselves to assign the cause of this degradation of the descendants of Canaan. We do not question the operation of physical causes, because the righteous Lawgiver makes use of physical causes to fulfil his penal decrees. It is enough for us to have ascertained the *moral cause* of this affecting degradation ; and to find it in that great law of the divine government which began to be thus early executed, and which affirms that a jeal-

ous God "visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate him." The curse upon Canaan is the curse of God upon filial disobedience and contempt; the blessing upon Shem and Japheth is God's blessing upon filial obedience and honor.

There is no being in the universe but has claims upon other beings; they are sacred claims. God has *his* rights; men, too, have theirs. It is among the convincing proofs of God's goodness, that he has not turned away in indifference and disgust from this abject and revolted race, but consents to govern them, and stands forth as the guardian and protector of the rights of men, and the avenger of their wrongs. He makes their claims his own, and gives them distinctly to understand that he holds them responsible, not only for their treatment of him, but their treatment of one another.

The mutual dependencies and relations of the race, have their origin in the domestic circle. Do what we will for the race in other ways; every other stream will be turbid, if this fountain be left impure. Nor is there any relation, the rights of which are more watchfully protected by the authority, the truth, and the providence of God, than those which thus form the great elements of human society. The supreme Lawgiver guards the rights of the ruler and the subject, of the teacher and the

pupil, and of the husband and the wife. He guards the rights of the child ; and he also guards the rights of the *parent*. The sacred names of father and mother are not with him of little import. He has given them a place in his Law ; he engraved them with his own finger on the tablet of stone ; he placed them close by the side of his holy Sabbath, and threw around them the shield of those mighty thunderings, and those vivid lightnings, and that angel's trump, and that mountain smoking, which, when the people of Israel saw, "they removed and stood afar off."

Filial piety begins *in the heart*; where all right affections begin. It is of little use for a child to attempt to regulate his outward conduct toward his parents, so long as he takes no pains to regulate his inward spirit. If he has disrespectful thoughts, and unkind emotions toward them, his conduct will be very apt to betray him. The character of the young is, in this respect, transparent. Let it be the great study of a child, in his treatment of his parents, to cherish the sentiments of love, respect, and reverence ; and they will not fail to eradicate those dissatisfied, complaining, untoward, impetuous, and angry passions, which so often express themselves in the outward deportment. Hatred, contempt, and even indifference will never give birth to honorable conduct. Such emotions may be restrained by motives that are mercenary, by

pride of character, or by the strong hand of power; but so long as they lurk in the heart, they will neutralize, if they do not poison all true frankness and ingenuousness of character. The rash and ungovernable spirit that will not brook restraint; the proud and haughty spirit that will not submit to be admonished, and not even counselled, mark the character of many a sullen daughter and many a disobedient and rebellious son. If the young do not nip them in the bud, they need not be disappointed if they give a mournful coloring to their future history.

A child may be bribed to think well of his parents; while all these sentiments of kindness are very apt to stop where the gratification stops. Where filial respect and honor are measured by favors and benefits, they are short-lived. Parents have a right to expect from their children a different state of mind from this. Neither mercenary expectation, nor slavish fear, is the germ of honorable deportment; it grows on a purer stock. Just as love to God produces respect and reverence for God, so does filial love produce respect and reverence for parents. There is a great fault either in the conduct of the parent, or the child, where the generous and unembarrassed emotions of love and confidence are restrained and subdued in the bosom of the young:

We know there are wicked parents, cruel, dis-

honorable and dishonored parents, whom it is difficult to love, respect, and confide in. Nor can a virtuous child love and respect them for these unhappy qualities. Yet will such a child never forget the filial relation. He will be grieved for the sins of his parents; but he will still remember that they are his *parents*, and as such, he will honor them. There is no relaxation, no lifting of the bond from the conscience of the child, on account of the parent's frailties. It is not a child's province to sit in judgment upon a parent's faults; but rather to weep in secret over them, and by his filial spirit to win and reform those whom he thus honors. That beautiful incident, which is recorded of Shem and Japheth, was not put upon the sacred record without design. There are few, if any finer scenes than this, exhibiting as it does, that nice observance of propriety, that susceptibility to a parent's honor, that scrupulousness and delicacy of filial affection, that are above praise. Children are sometimes eager in watching for the failings of their parents, and exult in the opportunity of reproaching and upbraiding them; but it is a temptation of the devil, for the purpose of bringing upon them the curse of Ham. A filial spirit is the more honorable and lovely for being expressed and cherished amid such discouragements. There is no more lovely characteristic in a child, and no brighter adornment, than that affection

which smiles on a parent who is unkind ; that respect and reverence which bows before a degraded parent ; that noble generosity of mind, that delicate intellectual and moral texture which turns its back upon a parent's faults, and covers them from the eye of the scorner.

Children owe their parents also the tribute of *affectionate and respectful language*. "A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul." There is a *heedlessness* in the intercourse of some children with their parents, which is not indeed always a true index of their spirit, and which, we have no doubt, leaves a false impression upon the mind of an observer. There are instances in which this unrestrained familiarity is carried so far, that it borders on disrespect. And though it may be too late for the parent to control it, it is not the less to be deplored.

We stand in doubt of the spirit of the age in which we live, when we hear the disrespectful language which we are sometimes forced to hear from the lips of children toward their parents. The son or the daughter that cannot command her tongue in the presence of her parents, is a child that causeth shame.

That spirit of *bold contradiction* in which the young sometimes indulge themselves, is a degenerate and degenerating spirit ; it soon becomes contempt and mockery. Angry emotions may be

cherished that are never expressed, and that cover the face of an ingenuous child with blushes as soon as he detects them. Acts of overt disobedience such a child may have been guilty of, which, in after life, it wounds an honorable mind to look back upon. But what child, in whose bosom a spark of filial honor remains, is not humbled at the recollection that he ever indulged himself in words of reproach and *impudence* toward those whose memory he loves to dwell upon, and to whose tenderness and care he is so much indebted? We scarcely know how such language *sounds*; how it sounds to the ear of a well-educated and courteous stranger; how it sounds in the ear of heaven; and only know that it is music to the ears of bad men, and triumph among fiends. It tells a fearful and melancholy tale, whoever hears it. A backbiting tongue is the mark of those who "shall not abide in God's tabernacle, nor dwell in his holy place." The tongue of man is his glory; it is one of the great peculiarities by which he is distinguished from the lower orders of the animal creation. With deep and tender interest do parents watch this growing power of speech in their children; and when that beautiful and expressive faculty which they have so assiduously cultivated, and so proudly elicited, utters its words of contradiction, reproach, and mockery, the wound is

deeper than though it were made by a drawn sword.

To speak with uniform respect *to* their parents, and *of* their parents; never to allow themselves in irreverent raillery at their parents' expense, even amid the scenes of their more secluded mirth; to resist, at the onset, the temptation to passionate and provoking language, however great the cause of provocation; to repress all words of malice and of the "scorners who delight in their scorning;" to set a "watch upon the door of his lips," and cultivate that courtesy which shrinks from wounding a parent's feelings by an incautious, or unguarded word; is a tribute of respect which no dutiful child withholdss.

Children honor their parents likewise by *filial and dutiful deportment*. The language of the Bible on this topic cannot be misunderstood. It is addressed to us in such forms as these:—"Children, obey your parents in the Lord; children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." "Hear ye children the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding." "A son honoreth his father." In carrying out the spirit of these instructions, they say, "Hearken unto the father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old." The same general sentiment, though of more comprehensive import, is beautifully expressed by that

requisition of the Levitical law, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man."

These tokens of outward respect, this docility, obedience, and kindness even to old age, constitute the great features of that external deportment which marks the filial character. A filial spirit is an obedient spirit; nor is it anywhere so severely brought to the test as by that absolute submission which is due to parental authority.

The disposition of children, in this article of their deportment, is widely different. Some there are who bluster and talk stoutly against submission to parental authority, and who for the moment refuse to obey; but who, like the young man in the parable, "afterwards repent," and do what they are required to perform. Others there are, who are all courtesy and smiles in the presence of their parents; and who, while they never utter a disrespectful word, yet go away and persevere in their quiet and noiseless disobedience. We justify not the reluctant obedience of the former; but "of the twain," it is the former who does the will of his parents. Few things are more grievous to a parent than the silent, unobtrusive and obstinate disobedience of the child whose language is, "I go, sir, but went not." No child honors his parents like the one who promptly obeys. Whatever else such a child may be tempted to do, he never thinks

of disobeying his parents; his *parents' will*, clearly expressed, is to him invariable law.

Nor does he ever outgrow their authority where it is lawfully exercised. And even where the parents cease to exercise it, there are filial duties. There are the sentiments of reverence and kindness; there is respect for the opinions of parents, and deference to their wishes. In the frailty of old age, it may be amid misfortune and calamity, poverty and dependence, there is a strength of filial devotion that is gratified by ministering to parental wants and comforts, and there is a tenderness, an honest pride, that are gratified only by such tributes of affection.

With a single exception, the authority of the parent is absolute and universal. The child is relieved from his obligation to obedience, only where the law of the parent comes in collision with the law of God. He may enter into relations which modify, and in some particulars supersede his filial relations; the daughter may become a wife and mother, and the son a father and husband; and these latter relations, while they never annihilate, obviously modify the filial relation. Where the duty of the wife and the mother interferes with the duty of the daughter; or that of the husband and father interferes with that of the son; the daughter is more the wife and the mother than she is the daughter, and the son is

more the husband and father, than he is the son. Collisions of this sort are very rare; where all the parties are wise, they will indeed never be found to exist; but where they do exist, the law of God relieves the child from his obligation to his parents. The wife must obey the husband, rather than the father; the husband must forsake father and mother, and "cleave unto his wife." In all cases, God's law is the paramount rule; and wherever the parent is either so weak, or so wicked, as to require what God has forbidden, or forbid what God has required; the child is under no obligation to obey. If the parent, for example, commands his child to steal, to curse and to swear, or to profane the Sabbath; or if he forbids the child from worshipping God, or from becoming a professed disciple of Jesus Christ, or from reading the Bible; it is the duty of the child, meekly, but firmly, to obey God rather than man. The parents' claims are, and ever must be, subordinate to God's. "Henceforth," says the Apostle, "we know no man after the flesh." "He that loveth father, or mother," says the Saviour, "more than me, is not worthy of me." The ties of kindred must give way to the ties of faith and love; every earthly consideration and alliance must bow to his claims who is our fathers' God, as well as our God.

Here the limitation ceases. Submission may be unpleasant; it may, and sometimes is, not a little

trying to the feelings of the child ; it may coundervail his judgment, and he may consider his parents in error ; but so long as it crosses not an enlightened conscience, a dutiful child, while he modestly retains his own convictions, will yield. He will consent to suffer in his feelings, his plans, his judgment, his interests, rather than be disobedient.

On this topic, I may not suppress the remark, that in all these expressions of affection and honor, *both parents are entitled to share*. Not more filial honor is due to the father, than to the *mother* ; the law of God makes no difference. He guards the gentle, the weak, and the more affectionate. A mother's claims are like a mother's watchful and unceasing tenderness.

It is recorded to the lasting disgrace of the great Roman orator and statesman, and who next to Seneca and Cato, the censor, was one of the best men that Rome could boast of ; that in all his writings he never mentions his *mother*. Not far from a thousand of his letters to his familiar friends are now extant, but though she lived to be the witness of her son's advancement, and was herself a lady of patrician rank, the sacred name of *mother* is not found among them all. This is paganism ; it is refined and polished paganism ; but it is not the religion of the Bible.

“ Honor thy father and thy *mother* ;” “ children,

obey your *parents* ;" this is the language of God's word ; it is the spirit of the whole Book. Of the *mother* it is said, " Her children shall rise up and call her blessed." Solomon, when he was exalted to the throne of Israel, " rose up to meet his *mother*, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be placed for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand." This is Bible religion. When Jesus of Nazareth hung on the cross, he did not forget his *mother*. Amid the horrors of that scene which put out the sun, and shook terribly the earth ; it was not a grave for himself that he thought of, but a home for her. Among the three last sentences he uttered, were these touching words, " Woman, behold thy son ;" and then turning to the disciple whom he loved, " Behold thy mother." This is Christianity.

Sacred are the thoughts, holy the memories that are associated with the name of *mother*. Had she youth and vigor ; they were exhausted in watching over the cradle of her children, or toiling while they slept, or were at play. Had she beauty ; she veiled it but to the eye of her children ; it withered in making them beautiful. Had she accomplishments, and was she fitted to shine in the circles of gaiety and fashion ; she sought not these distinctions, it was her highest ambition to be employed in the culture of her

children Had she a taste for amusements; her children were her joy, she studied to subdue every rival claim, that her time, and thoughts, and all her fine perceptions might be devoted to her children. Had she prayers; they were offered for her children. Had she tears, it was for her children she shed them; smiles, it was to see them smile; fears, it was to shield them from apprehension; hopes and endeared objects to secure, it was that they might be a credit to themselves, to their parents, and to their race. Did she suffer; it was for them, and so far as it could be, that they might not suffer; and did she die, it was with their names upon her heart, and with lips pallid and cold, that she gave them her blessing.

I know not what to think of the child who allows himself to trifle with a mother's claims. Yet have I seen such children, and have marked them. "Proud and haughty scorner is his name," who scorns a mother's authority. That son is to be held in very low estimate who is emboldened to disregard a mother's wishes, or resist her commands, merely because God has given him the more physical strength. He gains the victory, but alas! such victories do but effect his ruin. There are few indications of a more rash, obdurate, and depraved mind, than is expressed in unfilial and undutiful deportment toward her who

bare and cherished him, and who, if she has had anything to live for, it has been in and for her children.

These are plain and weighty duties, and there are not wanting plain and weighty considerations to enforce them. They are not the sympathies of our readers which we would fain enlist in this part of our subject, so much as their conscience. We ask an unperverted and honest conscience to judge of these obligations, and make an appeal to them to follow its dictates. No conscience is beyond the reach of conviction on such a subject; nor is there a child or youth so foward that he can live an easy and quiet life in persevering disobedience to his parents, if he will give a candid hearing, and a due consideration to the following plain and obvious thoughts.

Among other reasons why this debt of children to their parents ought to be paid, is the fact that *it is created by the law of nature, and enforced by the revealed law of God.*

The law creating it is founded in the superiority of the parent, and the inferiority of the child. All men allow that this law exists. It is a palpable revolt against nature to question either the parent's claim or the child's duty.. The most disobedient child no sooner becomes a parent, than he requires the duty and enforces the claim. The obligation is founded in natural sentiment, and demanded by its own

reasonableness. The obligation of justice, truth, and benevolence is not more real, nor more obvious, than this obligation of filial honor. Men in their wildest and most savage state recognize it; sages and philosophers who had but a mere ray of that moral sentiment which the Sun of Righteousness has thrown upon Christian lands, recognize it. So absolute did they regard the parent's authority, that the laws of pagan lands, not a few, invested the parent even with the power of life and death over his children. The parent is not more the natural guardian of his child, than he is his natural lawgiver.

This law of nature is nothing less than the law of God; it is God's voice speaking in nature, delivering this edict through human reason, and enforcing it by the natural impressions of the human mind. He utters the same voice in the sacred writings. The natural relation between the parent and the child is the groundwork of that revealed precept, "Honor thy father and thy mother;" "children, obey your parents in the Lord." This is God's law, who alone has a right to give law to all the inhabitants, and all the families of the earth. Children may be tempted to think that their parents usurp authority over them; but it is authority which God, the great Lawgiver, has put into their hands: in complaining of it, they complain of God, and in resisting it, they resist the

ordinance of God. The duty of submission to it is as plain as it can be made by the revealed will of the almighty Legislator ; revolt from it is rebellion against the Lord and proprietor of all things, and may well be followed by deep convictions of conscience, and deep repentance.

Nor is it an arbitrary law. "Obey your parents in the Lord," says the apostle, "*for this is right.*" It ought to satisfy us that God *wills* filial obedience, and that his wisdom and goodness stand pledged for the rectitude, the excellence of the precept. But the Lawgiver condescends to vindicate this law. And who will challenge either its excellence or wisdom ? Every virtuous mind approves it ; no child looks upon it as arbitrary or oppressive, whose reason is not perverted, and whose conscience and heart are not steeled against all right influences. The domestic relations need such a law, to preserve them from anarchy ; the young need it, to keep them from premature ruin ; the world needs it, else it would be an ungoverned world.

It deserves consideration, that this law holds the *first place* in the great code of laws which relates to the duties which men owe to one another. In the first table, God himself holds the first place, as he ought to do. In the second table, obedience to parents holds the first place ; nor are there wanting important reasons for giving it this pre-emi-

nence. It is the first of all the subordinate relations among men ; it lies at the root of all other relations ; and where the spirit of insubordination exists in this relation, it prevails elsewhere.

Next to the divine government, the first government instituted in every age of time is the patriarchal. So inseparable is obedience to parents from all the moral and social virtues, that this command has universally been regarded by ethical writers as comprehending all those duties which grow out of the various relations of human society. The relation between parent and child is the seminal relation between the government and the subject, the master and the servant, the guardian and the ward, the superior and the subordinate.

If the spirit and habits of insubordination are not formed in early life, the probability is, that they will never be formed. The man struggles with his exacting will and his imperious passions, because the child did not struggle with them ; and he remains an uncomfortable and jostling member of society, because he was not trimmed into shape, and form, and order, in the days of his youth. His character is formed, not by talent merely ; nor yet by genius and industry ; but in close alliance with these, by that vigorous self-discipline and self-control which commences, and is, in no small degree, perfected by his filial obedience.

That impatience of restraint and headlong im-

pulsiveness in a certain class of minds, and that sullen and dogged obduracy in another class, on which such multitudes make shipwreck, is here restrained and subdued. There is a large class of persons that will not be taught except by experience ; and it is pity that they are not taught in early life. The mass of those who learn the lesson at a later period, usually learn it by experience dearly bought. If the testimony of others does not influence them ; if their own observation does not ; if the wrecks of fortune and fame which the tide of ungoverned passion has thrown upon the lee-shore of human life do not, and they abandon themselves to the tardy correction of their own errors ; this one thing is certain, that they must be *sufferers*. Nothing will teach them but *suffering* ; nor is it the less severe, because they have brought it upon themselves, nor the less mortifying, because they might have avoided it. Well will it be, if the trials they encounter, and the shame they endure, prove not, like the punishment of Cain, "greater than they can bear." With reduced hopes, and abased pride, they sink below their proper level ; below their prospects and condition, below their domestic alliances, and far below their original purposes. And no thanks to themselves, and it may be, no thanks to their parents, if they are not at last found among the "loafers" of society, and because

more and more exacting, less and less satisfied with themselves and all around them.

Good citizens are formed from dutiful children. Sons are good husbands, and daughters good wives, who first learned to be dutiful children. I would never seek a disobedient daughter for a wife; nor does that lady give proof of discernment, who accepts a disobedient son as her husband. Were I a merchant, I would not seek a clerk; were I a mechanic, I would not seek an apprentice; a shipmaster, I would not, unless it were from motives of compassion, ship a seaman, from a family where children had never learned subordination to their parents. Well-governed families are the best security for a well-governed and happy community; obedience to parents is, in its own nature, fitted to form such a community; and more especially where this early habit is the fruit of religious training, that dutiful and amiable spirit which is enjoined by the fifth commandment constitutes one of the most important elements of moral character. It is one of the strongest restraints from evil, while the honored parent lives; and even long after that revered head sleeps in the dust, will it be found one of the great conservative principles of the child, if not among the selectest instrumentalities of leading him to the practice of godliness. Those tears are not shed in vain, with which a dutiful child waters his parent's grave; on that

green turf, flowers grow that never lose their bloom.

This debt of children to their parents *is also a debt of honor.* The claim of the parent is one of those rights which can never be perfectly enforced by human laws; *no* human authority can enforce the fulfilment of this sacred obligation. It makes its appeal to the magnanimity of the child. Laws deeply engraven on the inner man enforce it. It is the adornment of the child when he punctually meets the claim. He has no brighter earthly crown. The wreath is fresh and green, and on its leaves is found the honey-dew of his youth. “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother; for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.” Vain ostentation and empty decorations are they which so many of the young seek after, compared with that becoming, filial deportment, which wins the affections and conciliates the confidence of the wise and good.

For the consideration and respect of their fellow-men, the young are more beholden to their filial character and deportment, than to their external condition. We respect the humble child of poverty, who honors his parents; while we have no respect for the proud and degenerate progeny of affluence, who, because he can shake his purse in

the face of his parents, despises and dishonors them. What lustre does it throw around the character of a child that he uniformly treats his parents with affection and respect; that he is watchful of their claims and wishes, and even jealous of himself, and timorous lest he should be betrayed into rudeness, or even into those unfilial faults that are the result of inattention! A most beautiful characteristic of a well-bred child, is this delicacy of filial sentiment. Sweet is the remembrance, as he looks back upon by-gone years, if he can say he never inflicted a pang in the bosom of his parents. Men there are who would be more grateful, and prouder than they are, if they could honestly make this declaration their own. I may not stop to analyze it, if I could; there is a cord in the human bosom, every fibre of which vibrates to this claim of *honor*.

We dwell on such recorded instances of filial piety with pleasure; history takes pains to narrate them, and sometimes with more than her usual beauty and elegance. If Virgil had purposed to exhibit the hero of the *Ænead* in the most attractive colors, he could not have selected a finer scene than that in which *Æneas* is represented as bearing on his shoulders his aged and blind father Anchises from the flames of Troy. If the infirmities and decrepitude of old age meet with indifference anywhere, let it not be found in the bosom

of filial partiality and tenderness. Every sentiment of honor forbid it! When a Campanian lady made a display of her jewels at the house of Cornelia, the daughter of Scipio Africanus, and entreated her to favor her with a sight of her own in return; she produced her two sons, and said, *Hæc mea ornamenta!* these are my jewels! Roman resentment could not quench a mother's pride; and while it sacrificed the two Gracchi, perpetuated their fame.

No valley of human life is so humble, nor are any of its scenes so tragic, but such instances of filial attachment give beauty to the vale, and interest to the tragedy. The most beautiful example of this is found in the conduct of One with whose character you are all familiar. The youthful Son of Mary might be supposed to be exempt from this obligation; yet it is recorded of him, that "he was subject to his parents." He acknowledged the relationship, and he paid the debt. They had caressed and nourished him; they had cared for him, labored for him, prayed for him; and he honored them. Let the bold and foward youth, who is never shame-faced except at the unwelcome thought of submission to his parents, remember, that He whom angels worship, was honored by honoring his father and his mother.

What man would not be humbled and ashamed to stand over his parents' tomb, and be constrained

to remember that he had lived to do little more than grieve and dishonor them? All sin is dishonorable and base; men cannot commit it, and respect themselves, or be respected. The apostle Paul, in enumerating the sins of the heathen, includes filial disobedience in the same category with crimes the most base and dishonorable:—"Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, *disobedient to parents.*" An honorable mind shrinks from such associations. It requires great hardihood for a disobedient child to put a bold face upon such baseness. The consciousness of it disconcerts him; the remembrance of it in maturer years will cover his face with blushes. It gives a right-minded man a low opinion of himself, that he has treated his parents with disrespect and unkindness; it is a punishment to him to think of it, and he feels a secret compunction at his own dishonor.

Nor is this all. The faithful discharge of this filial obligation *has its reward.* The Apostle, speaking of the precept which enjoins filial piety, remarks, that it is the first command with *promise;*" intending by this remark to give emphasis to the thought, that however God might more liberally reward the obedience of a pious child hereafter, it should not be without its reward in the present world. The language of the law is, "Honor thy father and thy mother, *that thy days*

*may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."* As a general rule of God's providence, long life and prosperity are the allotment of dutiful children. There are no doubt moral causes to be assigned for this arrangement, both remote and proximate; because a dutiful child is more usually a virtuous man, and human life and comfort are not a little dependent on those moral virtues which grow out of a filial spirit. On the other hand, an undutiful child is more usually a bad and vicious man; and human life is made miserable and shortened, and secular enterprise withers under those traits of immoral character which grow out of a spirit that is unfilial.

But whatever be the causes, the promise itself is made good. It would be an important chapter in political economy, which should patiently trace the connection between filial piety and competence, comfort, and usefulness; and which should also trace the connection between poverty, suffering, disappointed hopes, and a premature grave, and disobedience to parents. Could we lift the veil and look into the interior of the domestic relations, and could we read the secret history of providence; we should find this great principle of the divine government abundantly disclosed and confirmed by facts. We hazard little in saying, that if you look to those in this land, in this metropolis, and in your own sphere of observation,

who prosper in the world, you will not find them among those who grew up to manhood disobedient, contemptuous, insolent children.

I have marked the history of many rich men, and men of influence in this community, and have inquired into the history of others ; and I have not found one among them all who was the grief of his parents. God approves the deportment of the dutiful son and the dutiful daughter, and rewards it. It is with some hesitation that the writer utters what he is now about to say ; nor would he do so, if the families to which he refers could be identified by any of his readers. It may be supposed that having, for more than forty years, the charge of a large congregation, and being officially familiar with domestic scenes and trials not a few, as their pastor and counsellor, he should have treasured some important facts on this painful subject. He has done so ; and in looking back upon those who were children when he assumed his pastoral charge, he well remembers those who were distinguished for their insubordinate spirit, and for the misery they brought into the domestic circle. Nor *can he recollect one of them* who is not now either struggling with poverty and dishonor, or else in his grave.

For the most part such young men have not “lived out half their days.” One there was, whose presence was the breaking up of all tranquillity

and happiness in his father's house, and whose conduct brought down those gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. His history is briefly told. He became a wanderer and a vagabond, and after struggling with disease and suffering, found an early death, and sleeps now in yonder distant graveyard among the hills of the Hudson. There was another, an only son, rude and exacting, wilful and unsubdued, the heir-apparent of wealth and honor, who found his home in the States' Prison, and who sleeps in dishonor "where the prisoners rest together." There was another, not only an only son, but an only child, who inherited a large fortune, whose filial disobedience plunged him into low vices, and who died at the mid-day of manhood weeping over his folly, and whose body rests within a mile of the spot where I am writing. There was another, who had no vice but that of profanity, and a temper which, in his domestic intercourse, was often enraged almost to madness, who, at the age of eighteen, was the first officer of a ship that sailed out of Boston ; but he died before he reached his twentieth year. With tears, his mother once said to me, "I am thankful there is such a place as the sea." And there was another, carefully trained up and tenderly cherished, who survived his father only to break a widowed mother's heart. Feeble and timorous woman as she was, she was wont to go at midnight to seek him out in some of the

purlieus of the theatre. He became too ungovernable for the land, and on the ocean his insubordinate spirit subjected him to such severities, that he never returned to tell the tale of cruelty. He did not die under the lash, but sickened and died of his wounds in one of the West India islands.

Go to the almshouse, if you wish to see disobedient children. Go to the prison, and you will see them there. Go to the gallows, and you will see them there. Many is the heart-rending confession which the officers of justice and the ministers of religion have listened to at the scaffold, that the beginning of the mad career which brought the culprit to his untimely end was his disobedience to his parents. I no longer expect to see a disobedient child, and one whose disobedience grows upon him, prosper. Such a child may change his course and become penitent and reformed, and, so far as it is in his power, undo what he has done; but if his repentance comes not with his early manhood, he will bear the burden to his grave. He that has seen a thoroughly practised son of disobedience ever turning out an honorable and useful man, has at least "one marvellous thing to tell of."

The God of heaven is watchfully observant of the conduct of children toward their parents. He is no indifferent spectator of that kind spirit and those refreshing smiles which light up the hopes of parents, and breathe their sweetness into the

domestic circle. Nor does he look with indifference on those angry frowns, and that rebellious spirit which depress a parent's hopes, and keep the domestic circle in fermented apprehension. When that discouraged father and that heart-broken mother bow in secret to tell *Him* their despondency and their griefs, those bitter cries enter into his ears. That anguish children trifle with, God regards. Those apprehensions which distress the parent, *He* cannot bear any more than *they*. Let no wayward son or daughter imagine that the Governor of the universe wraps himself up in dark clouds, and sits there silent and unseeing. Let every youth know, that, so long as God is on the throne, it is not safe thus to wring a parent's heart. The widow's God and Judge, and the parent's Avenger is he in his holy habitation.

The instructions of the Bible on this part of our subject are fearfully solemn and affecting. Poor Ham and Canaan! Bleeding Africa, what lessons hast thou been reciting to the young! And they are the *first lesson* read to the world just recovered from the Flood. I have heard a son *damn* his father; and I could not but call to mind the law, "Every one that *curseth* his father or his mother, shall be surely put to *death*." I have seen stubborn and rebellious sons, who "would not obey the voice of their father, nor the voice of their mother;" and when they chastened them, would not heark-

en; and I thought of those words, "All the men of his city shall *stone him with stones; that he die.*" The God of heaven looked upon such a child as not fit to live. And though this was Jewish law, the lesson which it teaches is for Jew and Gentile. The child that despises parental instruction and rebuke, that tramples on parental authority, and instead of those tokens of gratitude for parental affection which nature dictates, and God requires and honors, returns evil for good, and cursing for blessing, is a giant in iniquity, and furnishes an example of such hardened impiety as strikes the mind with horror. Sooner or later the judgments of heaven shall overtake such a man. I have seen such men, hanging in gibbets by the highway, in other lands, and on the banks of great rivers, with their flesh decayed, and birds of prey hovering over them, and their bones bleaching in the wind; and I remembered that it is written, "The eye that mocketh at his father, and refuseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

Perhaps I shall incur censure by the remark with which I am to close this long chapter. Yet is it forced from my bosom. It relates to *the growth and increase of this aggravated sin of disobedience to parents in the land in which we live.* Every eye sees them, every ear hears them, *every*

*parent knows them.* Public sentiment in this land has a strong tendency to the conclusion, that rulers and subjects, teachers and pupils, masters and servants, parents and children, are here free and equal ! This is too much the doctrine of the land, and of the age. It is to some extent the natural growth of our free institutions. The current of the public mind is strong toward the breaking down of all distinctions among men. There may be, and there is, not a little that is valuable in such views, in opposition to the claims of an arrogant aristocracy ; but the domestic relations are not the place for them. There is one circle where the doctrine of equal rights, unrestricted liberty, and universal fraternity must be repudiated ; that circle is a well-governed family. Be the advocates of this doctrine elsewhere, if you will ; but let *patriarchal* government stand on the firm basis on which God has placed it. Men may break asunder the bonds between the parent and the child ; but woe be to the man and the pen that does this accursed work !

We sometimes tremble when we look at the signs of the times. It may require greater watchfulness than even the more sober and reflecting possess, to stem this tide of popular opinion. It may demand more determined resolution than even the resolute boast of to prevent the loosest and rankest notions of government from corrupt-

ing the domestic relations and annihilating the spirit of subordination. With all our civil privileges, the difficulty is no small one, of instilling this spirit into the minds of the young. There is reason to believe that in no Christian land is the difficulty so great, and the temptations to filial disobedience so many, and so strong. The young boast themselves that they live under a free government, and will not be in bondage to parental restraint. From the restrictions of domestic authority, they make their appeal to public opinion ; and instead of encountering universal frowns, and meeting from on every side the cry of shame ! shame ! their undutiful and revolting spirit finds abettors, and they are implicitly encouraged in their rebellion. Instead of covering their faces with confusion, and being covered with reproach, they speak loftily and bear themselves like princes.

As men, as parents, as the friends of liberty and the rights of man, we enter our solemn protest against all these loose and pernicious notions. Much more do we protest against them, as God's ambassadors, and in his name, set in array against them the unchanging edict of *his holy law*. The thought may never be lost sight of, that this great law changes not with the changing maxims of the world, the changing forms of human governments, nor the changing habits of human

society. It is ever the same, and in every land. There is no relief from it, either in lands that are pagan, or Christian. It is not less binding under governments where, from the excess of liberty, there are strong temptations and great facilities to disregard it, than under governments where aristocratic influence, or despotic power give stringency to the parent's authority, and where public opinion frowns with severity on filial disobedience. This law of heaven is everywhere silently going into effect; it is everywhere being executed, whatever may be the views and usages of men. God's blessing is all the while descending upon the obedient, and his curse upon the disobedient.

Much does the writer wish that he could address his countrymen on this topic as its importance demands. There is a spirit abroad in this land, which is corrupting our social institutions at their fountain-head. It will not be many years before this truth will be realized, and it will be seen only to be lamented, that there are powerful influences at work which are gradually and rapidly relaxing the bonds of filial obligation. We feel that they are agencies greatly to be deplored, because they are at war with God, and at war with the highest and best character, and interests, of the rising generation. Yet do they find abettors everywhere around us; they are fostered by

every form of political and religious radicalism ; fourierism, with unblushing infidelity and ungodliness avows them ; while even our modest democracy is unconsciously supplying the secret aliment on which they live.

I say not these things as a politician, but as a moralist, and a defender of laws that are of higher than human authority. If, with all their excellence, our political institutions are exposed to this abuse, well may we take the alarm. The true friends of civil liberty will find their hopes defeated, just in the measure in which filial insubordination becomes rampant. The Bible is the great charter of human liberty ; but it is liberty with order ; it has a place for everything, and puts everything in its place ; a place for the parent, and a place for the child. It may be quite unfashionable for children to honor their parents ; a dutiful child may be the laughing-stock of his companions, and full-grown men may justify him in breaking away from parental restraint ; but God's eye is upon him for good, or evil, as he obeys, or disobeys his immutable law. It matters not where he is born, nor how he is educated, nor to what extent the spirit of disobedience prevails around him, nor how popular the principles by which a wayward spirit is justified ; there stands the law, " Honor thy father and thy mother ; that thy days may be long in the land which

the Lord thy God giveth thee." Men may lose sight of it; parents and children may lose sight of it; the halls of legislation, the courts of justice, the press and the pulpit even may lose sight of it; but there is One who will not lose sight of it. God never changes; his principles never alter; his law never alters. The spirit of disobedience to your parents, my young friends, may fall in with the spirit of the age; but it falls out with the immutable principles of the divine government. Men may seduce you, and flatter and honor your disobedience; but God will rebuke and dishonor you. He will "curse your blessings;" he will "corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces," in this world; and in the next, he will set his mark upon you, and shut you out of his kingdom. *Dishonor* your parents, and you give the devil the advantage he is seeking, in order to bind you in his chains. *Honor* them, and you will thus far honor God, and will be honored of God and man. You will make your parents happy, and it will be no grief of heart to *you*. How few causes of domestic misery would there be, if children were dutiful! How refreshing the smiles that light up such a circle! Such are the families where God is wont to be honored, and where he is wont to dwell. Next to his church, they exert the great conservatory influence in this lost world. Amid all its wickedness and woe, in such families

as these, is found one of the great redeeming qualities of the race ; they stand as way-marks, indicating the entrance to the path of life.

Blame me not that I use great plainness of speech, and that I am urgent in this expostulation. No class of men are more influenced by the popular breeze, than the young. They are apt to float with the current, and their hopes and principles are tossed upon the changeful billows. Take heed, therefore, that you be not driven by the tempest, nor engulphed by the storm. It is not a pure and tranquil, but an ignited and tempestuous atmosphere which you are breathing. You may be the sport of the breeze, and rest your hopes in the undulating waves of public opinion ; but there is only one firm resting-place in this changing world. God is a rock ; his work is perfect. It is only here, that hope casts her anchor safely. This rock of ages lifts its head high above the billows. The law of the Lord is perfect ; his word abideth forever.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### The First Youthful Patriarch Going from Home.

THE life of every person, if duly inspected, will be found to bear abundant testimony to the truth, that, while “a man’s heart deviseth his way, the Lord directeth his steps.” Not unfrequently is he thrown into the midst of scenes he little thought of, and of associations that are not of his own seeking. Events occur in his history which surprise none more than himself, and which conduct to results that sometimes disappoint his hopes, but are more often better than his fears.

These thoughts are suggested by a scene, with which we are all familiar, which the sacred historian sets before us in a most touching narrative. “And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he *dreamed*, and behold a

ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven ; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac ; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west and to the east, and to the north and to the south ; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again to this land ; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place ! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place *Beth-El*. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me and keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace ; then shall the Lord be my God ; and this stone which I have set up

for a pillar shall be God's house ; and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

Among the many thoughts suggested by this narrative, the first is, that YOUNG MEN ARE NOT UNFREQUENTLY PREPARED FOR USEFULNESS BY GREAT TRIALS. Jacob was comparatively young. The more permanent relations of domestic life were, with him, yet unformed ; every resolution he adopted, and every step he took, would give a coloring to all his future course in the present world, as well as affect his destiny beyond the grave. He was the third, in lineal descent, from the primogenitor of the Hebrew race ; dedicated to God in his infancy, and educated in his fear. His father Isaac, though not one of the most distinguished, was one of the loveliest characters in patriarchal history. His son Jacob, the child of Rebekah, his first love, was obviously the favorite of his parents ; nor was it any ordinary event that could have induced them to consent to his separation from them. But an eventful life was before him ; and one marked by such responsibilities, that God saw fit to prepare him for them by no ordinary dispensations of his providence. He was destined to become a noble man, the pride of his family, and to give his own distinguished and heaven-imparted name to the whole *Israel* of God.

But he did not reach this distinction without

trials. There were occurrences in his early history, deeply affecting, and deeply and forever humbling to his own mind. The deception and falsehood he had been guilty of toward his father, and the fraud he had practised on his brother Esau, were melancholy events; nor can the stigma they have left upon his character ever be blotted out. The immediate result of them was, that he was filled with remorse and fear, became an exile from the bosom of parental partiality and love, and was subjected to trials which plunged him into deep, and well-nigh irrecoverable perplexity.

The hope and prediction of his mother, that his absence would continue but a "few days, until his brother's anger turn away from him, and he forget that which he had done unto him," was never fulfilled. We nowhere read that she ever again set her eyes upon her darling son. A murderous spirit rankled in the bosom of Esau; years of absence, of toil, of watchfulness, of disappointed hopes—years of which he says, "in the day, the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from mine eyes"—passed away, before he could look for a peaceful, or even a safe return.

It is not always that particular trials are so obviously the result of particular transgressions. In the present instance, they were the immediate consequences of his sin. Perplexity and distress

followed him in all his exile, they poisoned his sources of joy, and dashed his honeyed cup with bitterness. God brought him to repentance and forgave his sin ; but he so “ visited his iniquity with the rod, and his transgressions with stripes,” that the discipline and trial of his long and embarrassing exile became the preparative for other scenes of still deeper trial, out of which he came as purified gold from the furnace. They were the very discipline he needed to fit him to become the selected depositary of God’s gracious covenant, and so many gracious communications to the world. Severe and self-procured as they were, they were the means of making him what he was, when he wrestled with the angel of the covenant at Peniel, when his pilgrim character sanctified the Holy Land, and when, in Egypt and before Pharaoh, his hoary head was a crown of glory, and “ the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, with both chariots and horsemen, a very great company,” paid their homage at his grave.

It is no uncommon thing for the young to be thus disciplined for usefulness and honor. Few have attained to this distinction, who cannot look back upon seasons of trial in their younger days. The tenderness and sympathy of home, even with all their fitting counsels, not unfrequently create too strong a sense of dependence on human helpers.

What is kindly designed to be the best preliminary to the best and most energetic character, may be, and often is, a doubtful preparative for the untried scenes of a young man's future pilgrimage.

The voice of heavenly wisdom instructs us, that "it is good for a man that he *bear the yoke in his youth.*" It is a melancholy fact, that the mass of young men learn only by *experience*. Dear bought, bitter experience, teaches them lessons which are never learned from the teachings of hoary wisdom. They must see with their own eyes, hear with their own ears, and suffer in their own persons. Launch out on the wide ocean of human life they will, ere they learn that there are boisterous winds, and many a perilous lee-shore. It were an instructive chapter in the history of great and good men, which should bring out to our view the effect which the perplexities and trials of youth had upon their character. Not a few are left in maturer years to mourn in obscurity over concealed and useless talent, and even no small degree of ineffective goodness, because they remained too long ignorant of the force with which they could both perform and suffer. Sweet flowers grow in the forest; and the brightest gems are dug from the deep sea. Early transplanting to the busy scenes of the world, to its severer responsibilities, and not unfrequently to its agitating conflicts and depressing trials, is the discipline the

mind requires to make it “bring forth fruit in old age.” Nothing is better fitted to correct inconsiderate thoughts, lead to sober reflection, and season the mind with wise and serious principles. Never is it in a state more happily qualified to receive instruction, or more disposed to lay it aside for future use, than when under the burden of trials, of which the young are most disposed to complain. They learn then in defiance of their own thoughtlessness. And they are permanent lessons ; the memory treasures them up ; they are sacred treasures, not easily lost or violated. They are from the wise ordering of a kind and heavenly providence, at the season when they are most needed. To a young man in the full career of vanity and self-indulgence, they bring the hour of faithful upbraiding, but more tender and touching expostulation ; of solemn caution, but still more solemn resolves ; of passion controlled and appetites curbed. And though there are some minds that are depressed and crushed by them, and others that are driven to the recklessness of despair ; yet is this God’s ordinary method of forming the most wisely balanced and vigorous character. Nothing is effective to which the grace of God is not superadded ; but when it is superadded to such a discipline, it forms a character prepared to take share in the burdens of human life—in its sorrows and joys, its solicitude and hopes ; a char-

acter to which restraint and self-denial, forethought and self-control, become habits that are welcomed and cherished.

We remark in the next place, that IN SETTING OUT IN THE WORLD, YOUNG MEN GREATLY NEED THE DIVINE DIRECTION AND BLESSING. Wicked as he had been, never did Jacob more need the sympathy of men, and the care of God, than in this crisis of his history. It was the turning point in his destiny. He remained a member of his father's family longer than most young men—longer than was wise. To say the least, he was more than thirty years of age, when he went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. This child of promise, this favorite son of Rebecca, left home under circumstances of no enviable kind. This heir of a powerful family, already its chief and head, did not take a fair start in the world; he was a fugitive "because of the anger of his brother Esau, lest he should kill him." He goes forth secretly, precipitately, and alone. He had no studied arrangements for his journey; he went unexpectedly, a solitary traveller and on foot. "With my staff," says he, "I passed over this Jordan." Few young men have left the home of their childhood and youth under darker clouds, or with a heavier heart. With what emotions did he bow his head for the last time with Isaac and Rebekah before God's throne, and rise from that solemn

act of worship in which he received a father's blessing, and then to turn his back upon home! With what fear of Esau's murderous hand! with what remorse for his own wickedness! With what regret of the past; with what a melancholy retrospect of scenes never to be revisited! There was no mother's eye to follow him; no longer was there extended to him a father's care. He was going among those whom he never saw, and his way was desolate. He was alone in the world, and no eye was upon him but that of God and his invisible angels. It could scarcely be otherwise than that he was a most unhappy and disconsolate young man.

He arrived at Luz, a pagan city which lay on the frontiers of the tribe of Benjamin. He did not enter the city; night overtook him, and whether he found refuge in some stranger's tent, or slept in the open field, or lived, or *died*, seemed of little consequence to him. He was sad and weary; and the sacred historian tells us, that "he lighted upon a certain place and tarried all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillow, and lay down in that place to sleep." There, amid the silence of the night, away from the tumult of the world, slept the youthful Jacob. The dewy heavens covered him. The father of Israel's twelve tribes slept in the lone field.

Fatigued with toil and grief, a stone was his pillow ; his keeper, the "Shepherd of Israel."

"Thou knowest, O Lord," saith the prophet, "that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." If there is a period when even a wild, self-willed, self-confident, self-conceited, pleasure-loving, and pleasure-seeking young man feels his need of being cared for by that kind providence which "hears the young ravens when they cry;" it is when the cord which binds him to the home of his father's is first sundered, and he goes alone and friendless into the world. It may be, he goes under the burden of youthful follies and wickedness; of parental love ungratefully requited, and parental counsels and authority abused and trodden under his feet. And then his heart smites him, and the burden is greater than he can bear. Or it may be, he goes with an honest conscience and approving smiles, and that his only trial is the sundering of those bonds of filial affection and duty, which have been so long and so pleasantly cherished. Even then he goes with a heavy heart, and "with wandering steps and slow." A false step may lead him into paths from which he may never be reclaimed; snares may entangle him which may never be broken; and associates may crowd about him who are "lured only by the scent of prey." And even if he chooses the wiser path, much does

he need of caution and reserve, of integrity and firmness, of "the wisdom that is from above," to keep and strengthen him in the way. It is a happy home which such a young man departs from, and one which he has contributed to make happy. But it is his Eden home no longer.

"The world is all before him, where to choose  
His place of rest, and Providence his guide."

To a young man thus forsaken of earth, the care and guardianship of the God of Jacob is worth more than earth can give. When Hagar was banished by Abraham to the wilderness, the God of Abraham did not forget even the bondwoman and her son. To the depressed descendants of this same exiled Jacob, God said, "Although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a *little sanctuary* in the countries where they shall come." How precious such a thought to a young man, away from home, with none to look to, and none to lean upon but Jacob's God! Most delightful is that expostulation, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father! thou art the guide of my youth?" There is one whose eye sees the wanderer, even in the far off wilderness, or farther sea, whose ear hears him, whose heart pities him. Dejected and in solitude, shut out and disinherited by all the world, the God of heaven is his guide and refuge.

It is written in the Scriptures, “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.” The God of Jacob is the young man’s friend. Be he anywhere, on land, or ocean; in the solitary desert, or in the crowded city; with such a friend and guardian, he is safe. Away from God, all is dark and full of danger. There is security and peace only under the shadow of his wing; nor may he ever despair of help from God.

But this narrative suggests a more interesting thought still: it reminds us of THE CONDESCENDING GRACE OF GOD TO THE WANDERER WHEN HE LEAST EXPECTS AND LEAST DESERVES IT. If Jacob was a pious young man, his piety was of a very doubtful character. It was not superior to a bare-faced stratagem, and one addressed to the more corrupt affections of the human heart. I would not like to have gone from home with the guilt of Jacob on my conscience. He had been a deceiver. He had taken advantage of his aged father’s debility and blindness, and lied himself into his brother’s inheritance, and by false assurances, often repeated, secured the blessing which belonged to the first born. His conduct had been wicked to a degree that enlists all our sympathies in favor of defrauded and injured Esau, even though he was not the child of promise. His mother, led away by fond partiality to her favorite son, spread the snare by

which he was, at first reluctantly, but at length easily entangled, and into which indeed he ultimately rushed with eagerness. The conduct of Rebekah in this whole transaction was reprehensible in a high degree, and most dishonorable in her as a mother. And it deserves to be remarked that from this hour her name disappears from the sacred history. Honorable mention is made even of Deborah, *her nurse*, and the place where she died, and of the oak in Beth-el where she was buried; but of *Rebekah* nothing farther is recorded but the fact of her burial in the cave of Macpelah. She was in the prime of life; but her name was doomed to silence; this base act of fraud is the last recorded act of her life, and her memory comes down to posterity under this opprobrium.

Well did Esau complain. The circumstances of this deception are very touching, and are narrated with great simplicity and beauty. We know not which to compassionate most, the venerable father, as he first discovered Jacob's deception, and "trembled very exceedingly," or the disappointed and heart-broken son, when "he cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry, *Bless me, even me also, O my father!*" There is no apology for such conduct as this, on the part of Jacob. It is true, that God had, before their birth, revealed the purpose to his mother, that "the elder should serve the younger." But this

could not justify Jacob's fraud. The divine purpose is no rule of action ; it has no power of turning falsehood into truth, nor of diminishing the turpitude of conduct which the divine law forbids. It is no part of God's purpose to diminish or relax the obligations, at all times, and under all circumstances to obey the command, " Speak ye every man truth to his neighbor." It was an infamous crime in Jacob that he had thus uttered the most palpable falsehood, and even made religion the cloak of his dissimulation.

And now this young man, with all this burden of wickedness upon him, leaves the scenes of his childhood and youth, and goes into the world. Who would suppose that he would prosper ; much less, that he was just on the eve of being made the subject of God's converting grace, and of receiving unwonted manifestations of his goodness and mercy ? We should scarcely have predicted good of a young man, leaving home under such auspices ; but rather should we have uttered ominous forebodings, and in his departure, seen signs of no bright augury.

Yet approach, and see this guilty wanderer, on that first night after he had fled, as he lies in the open field. Will his conscience suffer him to *sleep* ? Yes, he sleeps. But do not his thoughts trouble him ? Does he not start in apprehension and terror ? Does no fearful dream agitate him, and is

he disturbed by no unwelcome visions of the night? Yes, his mind is awake; he dreams, and God speaks to him in his dream. And strange to say, his thoughts are tranquil, his dreams delightful, and are even heavenly dreams. It is no image of his defrauded brother that rises up before his excited imagination; nor is it the voice of his revengeful pursuer that he hears. Other images are before his wakeful mind, and another voice speaks in tones of forgiving love. “And he *dreamed*, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the *angels of God* ascending and descending on it.” This was not all. “And behold, THE LORD stood above it.” No angry sword of justice was in his hand; nor was there a word of rebuke uttered by his lips; nor did a frown darken his brow. Behold, the Lord stood above the ladder, and said, “I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac. The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And *behold I am with thee*, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again unto this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.” Wonderful dream! wondrous

vision ! wondrous announcement to such a deceiver !

He was alone in the desert ; and God gave him the pledge of his protection and favor. He feared the wrath of his infuriated brother ; and God showed him angelic messengers for his defence. He was on his way with the view of forming those social alliances which are confessedly the most important in the world ; and God told him that his seed should be as the stars of heaven. We may not stop to inquire into the disputed meaning of the ladder, and the descending and ascending angels. To our own mind they indicate the superintending providence of God ; they taught Jacob that the divine care was extended over all, and had a particular regard for him in his exile. Fanciful and allegorical writers have found almost every truth—philosophical, religious and ethical—in this figurative representation. We see in it angel ministrations—“ ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation.”

When the Apostle Paul had been contemplating some of the more precious and glorious truths of the gospel, he pauses in his rapid survey of them, and dwells upon their affecting import. “ Whom he did *foreknow*, he also did *predestinate* to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also *called* ; and whom he called, them he also *justified* ; and

whom he justified, them he also *glorified*." Never was there a brighter chain of truths, or more closely linked together than these. They are wondrous truths; and it is no marvel the writer demands, "*What shall we say then to these things?*" So we exclaim in view of these disclosures to Jacob in the desert, *What shall we say to these things?* There were peculiarities in this transaction we know, arising from the revealed purpose of God toward the descendants of Abraham in the line of Sarah and Rebekah. The purpose was of eternal origin, and the promise of early date. Jacob was to transmit the promise, and in his descendants it was to be fulfilled, and forever to remain the source of the strongest hopes, and brightest prospects of all the children of God. The time of its fulfilment was drawing nigh; and Jacob must be exiled from his father's house, met on his way in the open field, taught of God, encouraged in his errand to Haran; and all this, notwithstanding he was so wicked a man. He was the descendant of a pious ancestry, and the child of the covenant which God had made with his fathers; and from regard to this covenant, God here graciously revealed himself to him as his covenant God. We do not read of his being a pious man before this period; nor do we read of anything that is inconsistent with piety in his subsequent history. He seems to have become a converted man on that

remarkable night, and during that gracious interview with the God of his fathers. God is not wont thus to establish and confirm his covenant with those who have no spiritual relation to it; so that, although the Scriptures are silent on this subject, may we not date the new-born hopes and song of Jacob from this remarkable scene?

We have, therefore, but one answer to the question, when we inquire, What shall we say to these things? We can only say, this is one of the facts, of which heaven will recount so many, that stands out in illustration of God's marvellous and discriminating grace. Nor do the peculiarities of Jacob's relation to the Abrahamic covenant obscure its lustre. Such is not the manner of man, we know; but God's thoughts are not the thoughts of man, nor his ways man's ways. Jacob is not the only young man who is reached by covenanted influences, in his wanderings from home, and in his wanderings from God. God cares for many a youth who does not yet care for him, because he is a child of the covenant he made with his parents. He is not the only young man whom the voice of prayer and the sins of youth have followed into the world; and for whom the voice of prayer has prevailed over the sins of youth. Nor is he the only young man who has found repentance and pardon; and who, while he deserves to be an exile from the divine favor, has found the divine providence

watching over him, and the divine grace his refuge. The distant heaven has been accessible to him ; the intercourse intimate, the views delightful, the voice his Father's voice. Jacob's experience has probably been the experience of thousands. Many a young man has thus, as he has left his father's house on earth, for the first time looked toward his Father's house in heaven. Sinner as he was, and laden with guilt and woes, and perhaps with a stone for his pillow, ministering angels have hovered over his head, and Jacob's God has uttered to him the words, *Behold, I am with thee!*

The effects of this interview with the God of his fathers were very pleasant upon Jacob's mind. He thought the grace was wonderful. He had little thought of such scenes, when he made his bed on the open field ; nor were the impressions they made easily forgotten. The narrative on which we are dwelling PRESENTS THEREFORE AN AFFECTING VIEW OF THE OBLIGATIONS OF YOUNG MEN WHO ARE THUS THE OBJECTS OF GOD'S REGARD. Jacob awoke from these visions with views and emotions such as he had never possessed before. His first thought was, "Verily, the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not!" Distance did not shut him out from God ; the darkness did not hide from him. He felt a reverence for God, which was new even to one who had so often bowed at his altars. "He was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place ; this is none other

than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" He had heard only the words of promise and the voice of mercy; yet he was *afraid*. They were no ordinary scenes through which he had passed, and no ordinary spot of earth was it which he occupied. It was holy ground; for God was there. Though the open field, it was the house of God; it was the gate of heaven, though far from the abodes of men; it was God's altar, though but the stone on which he had slept. He could think of little else than God, and only bow and worship.

He had been the Lord's by being dedicated to him in his early years; but he now acted for himself, and his choice and purpose were, that the God of his father, Abraham and Isaac, should be his God. On that hallowed ground, he set up a *memorial* of God's distinguished goodness and mercy toward him, and inscribed upon it God's name. "And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil on the top of it; and he called the name of that place *Beth-el*." It was God's house and God's altar; he consecrated it to God, and according to the custom of the East, anointed it with oil. Here, in this sacred spot, he resolved thenceforward to be God's servant. "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me and keep me in this way that

I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace ; then *the Lord shall be my God.*"

Such were young Jacob's impressions, in view of God's goodness and mercy toward him, on that memorable night. And how many young men are there, as well as others who are not young, who are reminded of the wonderful goodness and mercy of God toward them both in early and later periods of their history ? It were grateful to requite this loving-kindness. Such mercies and deliverances are not always remembered ; yet is it more delightful to remember and requite, than to forget and neglect them.

You were strangers in a strange land, and the God of heaven was your friend. You were fatherless, and he was a Father to you. You were in "dangers oft," and he protected you ; embarrassed with difficulty and darkness, and he guided you in a plain path. You were oppressed with fear, and sunk in despondency, and he relieved your apprehensions and cheered you on your way. You were poor, and he has given you wealth ; low and abject, and his gentleness has made you great.

How fitting the inquiry, "What shall I render to the Lord, for all his benefits toward me ?" You remember the time, the place, where his paternal hand was stretched forth to save you from ruin ; you can look back on all the way in which he has

led you, and made you what you are. Many a stone would be set up for a pillar, and many a place would be to you a Beth-el, if all the scenes which mark the divine goodness toward you were kept in thankful remembrance. It was a timely resolution of Jacob, "The Lord shall be my God!" Why not make it your own? You will be happy then, even though, like him, you have only a stone for your pillow; you will not be friendless then, even though you have none to care for you but the God of Jacob.

Jacob did not become pious too soon; nor was he the gainer by the sins of his youth. If you trace his history, you will find it full of vexations, disappointment, and calamity; and his sufferings bore a marked analogy to his sins. More than once did it seem that his "gray hairs would be brought down with sorrow to the grave." Esau and Jacob met not often; it was easier to forgive than to forget. Nor do we read of their meeting after the death of their father. The bond was sundered when Isaac died. It is a relief to our minds to read the remark of the sacred historian, "And his sons *Esau* and *Jacob* buried him." There they met, and there they parted. Their descendants were never friends; but their own feuds, we may believe, were buried in the old man's grave.

This is an affecting lesson to the young. There is no such thing in the government of God as a

young man letting conscience swing from her moorings, and taking his fill of pleasure, and never feeling the oppressive burden of his former sins. He cannot forget them. If he becomes a pious man, they will haunt his memory ; they will creep within the folds of his midnight dreams ; they put a weapon into the hands of his great spiritual adversary, and often give a sting to the fiery darts of the devil. None appreciate as they ought to do, the claims and blessings of early piety. A careful inspection of almost every man's history, who does not consecrate to God the dew of his youth, will disclose the fact that he ordinarily bears the marks of his iniquity to his dying day. If you would be freed from the pangs of a guilty conscience, and the apprehensions of God's displeasure ; if you would not have your fairest hopes blasted in the bloom ; if you would obtain the mastery over yourself, and not be the sport of appetites and passions that destroy both body and soul in hell ; if you would enjoy that measure of blessing which God gives you on earth, and besides this, have a treasure so safe that it never can be lost ; if you would be prepared for death, and not be afraid to die ; early seek the face of the God of Jacob. Commit yourself to the care of Israel's shepherd. Do it soon ; do it now. Wait not until this bright morning of human life is overcast ; till the sounds of joy

have ceased, and the flowers, which are now opening to its rising sun, lie desolate under the cold wind. Wait not until the snow of time falls on your hoary head, when the long winter's night shuts in, and the stone which you once purposed to set up as God's altar, shall be set up by other hands only to mark your grave.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### The First Instance of Wrestling with the Angel of the Covenant.

MANY a long year passed away before Jacob made his arrangements to return to the Holy Land. He could not forget the circumstances of his departure; and his heart still trembled “for fear of his brother Esau.”

Esau, in the mean time, had settled in the mountains east of the river Jordan, and had become a rich and powerful prince. The country which he occupied at the time of Jacob’s return from Mesopotamia, was originally possessed by the descendants of Seir; a numerous and powerful people as early as the time of Abraham, and whom Esau subdued. It was called Mount Seir, or the mountains of Seir, and formed a province in Arabia, which was subsequently called Edom, or Idumea, and from which the descendants of Esau spread themselves throughout Arabia Petrea, south of Palestine, and between the Dead Sea and the

Mediterranean. In returning to the land from which he had been so long exiled, Jacob conducted himself with all the caution of a prudent man, and with the humility and confidence of one who feared God. His comfort and safety demanded that he should leave the land of his exile; and he had no small apprehension in view of his return to Palestine. What his course of conduct was is beautifully narrated in the following paragraph:

“ And Jacob was left alone ; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh ; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name ? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be no more called Jacob, but Israel ; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him and said, Tell me I pray thee thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it thou dost ask after my name ? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel ; for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Peniel, the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.”

The event of which we have the preceding record, is confessed to be of difficult explanation. Some have supposed that the appearance of the angel, and Jacob's wrestling with him, was a mere prophetic vision, designed to cheer and comfort the holy patriarch, by the assurance that the danger which he immediately apprehended, should be averted, and that he should be prospered in his return to his native land. Others have concluded that the transaction is to be understood *literally*, and that it is only with this interpretation that the import of it can be discerned.

Without attempting a solution of all the difficulties which this interpretation is supposed to involve, we have no hesitation in adopting it, and no difficulty in discerning the practical design of the narrative. Jacob was a child of God and the peculiar care of his covenanted mercy. Though he had been far from uniformly conducting himself as a good man, and had sometimes manifested no small distrust in the divine faithfulness ; he continued to be the object of the divine guidance and protection. He had for many years been an exile from his father's house, and a servant in the family of a covetous and envious kinsman. Worn out with cruelty and oppression, he was now returning, accompanied by a beloved family, and a numerous retinue, which God had given him while in Padanaram. On his way, he was informed that

his brother Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men. He recollects what had taken place in the family of his father, and what reason he had to expect that the intentions of his brother were hostile. It is not surprising that he was "greatly afraid and distressed," and that in this embarrassment, he lifted up his soul to God.

In that memorable vision in the open field, God had said to him, "The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed." He knew that God was faithful; while the dispensations of his providence, and probably the presentiments of his own mind, indicated to him, that the time was not far distant when the promise would be fulfilled. It is no marvel that he "was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Yet it was not a blind and heedless confidence. After having adopted such measures as his wisdom and discretion suggested to steal upon the heart of Esau, he made arrangements to spend the night in solemn and fervent supplications. A portion of the night he had resolved to spend alone, and therefore rose up long before day, and sent his wives and children and servants over the brook, and then retired to a solitary place, to renew his prayer. While he was "stirring up himself to take hold on God," and to pour out his soul with "strong crying and many tears," a person in the form of a man appeared to him, and engaged in

*wrestling* with him. Jacob soon perceived that his antagonist was more than human, and therefore put forth all his strength and ardor in wrestling for a blessing. The prophet Hosea more than intimates that there was something spiritual in this conflict, as well as natural; for he says, Jacob "had power over the angel and prevailed; he *wept* and made *supplication*." When the angel saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he "touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh," and put it out of joint. Notwithstanding this, the patriarch continued the conflict; and when the angel said, "Let me go," he adhered to his purpose, and said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." The heavenly messenger then assured him that his holy exertion and importunity were not in vain,—and "he blessed him there."

This event in the life of the patriarch Jacob has been so universally considered as exhibiting the propriety, nature, and encouragements of prayer, that nothing is more common among Christians than to speak of prayer under the idea of *wrestling* with God, and of successful prayer under the idea of wrestling like Jacob, and prevailing like Israel.

Among the many truths which this incident inculcates, one is that men *have but one refuge*; *there is but One to whom they can look for relief in times of distress and danger*. The object of Jacob's supplication was the Supreme God. After

he had been wrestling with the angel Jehovah in human form, he says, "I have seen God face to face."

The Old Testament Scriptures frequently speak of a distinguished personage under the name of the *angel of Jehovah*.\* To Hagar the angel of Jehovah said, "I will exceedingly multiply thy seed;" and then it is added, "She called upon the name of Jehovah who had spoken to her." The angel of Jehovah, we are told, called to Abraham and said, "*By myself* I have sworn, saith Jehovah, that in blessing I will bless thee." To Moses, we are told, that the angel of Jehovah appeared in the burning bush at Horeb, and said, *I am the God of thy father; I am that I am.*" The patriarch Jacob more than once speaks of this angel of Jehovah. "The *angel* of God said to me, *I am* the God of Beth-el." When he blessed the sons of Joseph, his language was, "The *God* in whose presence my fathers Abraham and Isaac have walked, the *God* who hath nourished me from my first being to this day, the *angel* who hath redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads!"

Jacob knew with whom he was wrestling; it was the angel of the covenant, the God of Abraham in human form, in some respects distinct from God, yet truly and essentially the same with God. The divine kindness had been most conspicuous toward him during his absence from his

\* "Scripture Testimony to the Messiah," by John Pye Smith, D.D.

native land. Many a time he would have sunk under the load of oppression, and been overcome, if the God of his fathers had not been his refuge. Well might Israel say, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us." He was not insensible of the gracious interpositions of a kind providence in what was past, nor did he overlook them in time to come. Involved as he now was in perplexity and trouble, and apprehending his brother's anger, instead of meditating how he should meet force with force, his only resort was to lay the whole concern before God, with the hope that he would graciously interpose, and so direct the circumstances and events of his journey, that peace and safety might be the happy issue of this unexpected meeting. He lifted up his soul to God in a short ejaculation, so humble, so fervent, so appropriate, that all the piety of his heart seems to flow out, and you at once discover where his strength lies, and what he considers his last resort. "And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee ! I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant, for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and

now I am become two bands. Deliver me I pray thee from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children." Not satisfied with this, he set apart a night of prayer, when he might enjoy a season of calm and undisturbed access to the mercy-seat.

Times of fear and trouble are times of special prayer with the people of God. No sooner are they pressed with perplexity, than they set their hearts to seek relief at the throne of grace. It is their privilege, at such seasons particularly, to be alone with God, and to seek opportunities in which they may indulge all the unrestricted familiarity and fervor of children. They find relief only in calm and deliberate communion with God. Their hope is in the favor of God alone; their desires are directed immediately to him; they have peculiar views and feelings which they wish none but God to know; and therefore, like Jacob, often desire to be left alone, that they may speak with God, as a man speaketh with his friend.

This may appear strange to the men of the world, who have no impressions of the being and overruling providence of the Most High. Such persons have no practical views of his minute inspection of the concerns of men, or of his all-pervading care, and no confidence in his faithfulness and mercy. But is it an absurd belief, that the omnipresent God watches

over all the events of this lower world, and that he can and does answer the prayers of his people? However the men of the world may reason in seasons of peace and prosperity; in seasons of danger they feel their dependence as well as other men. Whatever the philosopher may say in the hours of cold debate; in the hour of trouble, there is something that leads him, as it were involuntarily, to exclaim, *Lord, help me!* And what the philosopher may be constrained to do from the dictates of nature, the Christian does from intelligence, affection, and choice. His heart is placed on God. He feels his dependence. He is habitually sensible that "every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. On every emergency, it is his privilege to repair to God as his only refuge and helper. Nowhere else can the people of God go so well, as to a throne of grace; nowhere else can they go so confidently, when threatened with evil, or alarmed with fears. God is our refuge and strength, a every present help in trouble.

*But, how are the people of God to look to him in times of distress and danger?* Here much may be learned from the conduct of the patriarch. One of the first thoughts which suggests itself from this narrative, as to the manner in which we ought to draw nigh unto God, is that it should be

in unfeigned sincerity. Men may draw nigh unto him with their lips, while their heart is far from him. Good men often do this; but this is not the sacrifice with which God is well pleased. He has respect to the heart.

It is equally obvious that the true spirit of prayer is the spirit of earnestness and fervency. God has a right to expect that when men come to him for help, they should feel their wants, should know the errand on which they come, and should urge it with earnestness and fervency. No person can read the account of Jacob's wrestling with the angel, without being convinced that he was in earnest. They are touching words which say that "he wept and made supplication." Some ardency of affection is due to the greatness and glory of that God whom we worship; to approach him with indifference and carelessness, is to treat him with disdain. The character of men too, as creatures, and as sinners, may well give urgency to their desires when they come before the Holy God. There is also a fitness in this spirit which disposes the people of God to appreciate his mercies and to receive them with thankfulness. Everything which bears a relation to the being they approach, to the object of their access, and the character of the worshippers, justifies and demands a holy fervency and engagedness.

Not inconsistent with this is an humble and

modest spirit. The spirit of prayer is far from being boisterous and self-confident. It is the unassuming disposition of a child, who, though he has no claims, has many entreaties to urge upon the heart of its offended parent. Men who *wrestle* with God for his blessing, like Jacob, must lose their own strength, and become sensible of their weakness and dependence. God is often pleased to make his people feel this, in the seasons of their most ardent expectation in prayer. As the angel touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, and showed him, that instead of gaining the victory by his own vigor and activity, he was entirely at the mercy of his competitor; so does God, and often in a very remarkable manner, convince his people that it is not by their own strength that they prevail with him. All who wrestle with him must be made sensible of their own weakness, of their utter unworthiness, and of their complete and absolute dependence on his free and sovereign mercy. The reason why Christians strive so long with God without success, is that they so often strive in their own strength, and secretly depend on themselves rather than on him. The spirit of self-confidence and self-righteousness cleaves to their best efforts; and it is necessary for them often to wrestle long and hard, and meet with unexpected tokens of their impotency before they are truly convinced of it. Jacob no doubt strove too much in

his own strength, and trusted too much to his own power; and had he succeeded in wrestling with the angel without having his thigh dislocated, he might have supposed his own arm had gotten him the victory. And are not Christians exposed to the same temptation? How often do they find themselves giving a secret merit to their own duties—how often expecting to be heard for their much speaking—how often do their fears and hopes rise and fall according to the freeness and fervency of their petitions; when at the same time they have no special views of their unworthiness, and no holy breathings that the Lord may be magnified! The opposite of this disposition is the spirit of prayer.

We would add to this humble and self-diffident spirit, the spirit of perseverance and importunity. When believers are made sensible that they cannot prevail with God by their own strength or righteousness, and at the same time do not relinquish their importunate pleadings at the throne of grace, they have the true spirit of prayer. And here the conduct of Jacob speaks volumes. Though while he was wrestling his thigh was put out of joint, yet he was so intent upon obtaining the blessing, that he kept his hold on his Antagonist, and refused to give up the conflict. The blessing appeared so valuable, and in his view was so entirely depending on the will of his superior, that his own im-

potence, so far from inducing him to give up the contest, led him to persevere with the more determined resolution. He hung upon him, and would not let him go. It was of little moment to him that he had lost the power of victory, or that his natural strength had failed. His confidence was in God, and not in himself; and he did not stop to inquire what he had lost, or what he suffered, so long as he could obtain the blessing.

How few are there who wrestle like Jacob, and have the highest confidence and expectation when their strength is all gone! There are difficulties in coming to the mercy-seat which very often dishearten and discourage them. Their souls are sad. The prospect is gloomy. They weep. They make supplication with strong cries. Though God appears as their covenant God, and stands engaged by his promise to hear their prayers; yet there are obstacles in their path which they know not how to surmount, and difficulties which they feel unable to remove. They do all in their power to come nigh to God, but all is darkness, and they have no cheering tokens of his favor. They struggle hard, but see very little fruit of their prayers. They go to their closets and return from them, but everything is gloomy and unsatisfying. The blessing is still at a distance, and they feel strong temptations to relax their diligence and abate their zeal. If they do not immediately gain

their object, they sink down under the pressure of their dependence and worthlessness; their love grows cold, their faith weak, and all their exertion dies away. It is not so with those who are truly engaged in prayer. If God withholds the light of his countenance, this increases their importunity; if they painfully feel their own weakness and unworthiness, this inspires them with perseverance and hope. Never are they so truly engaged in pleading with God, and in hanging upon his mercy, as when they feel emptied of self, dependent on God, worthless and useless in themselves; and as when they feel, that without his favor and gracious answer to their requests, they must irrecoverably sink. O it is then, when all the power of resistance is gone; when, by some sacred touch their strength is turned into weakness; when just about to sink, they fall into the arms of mercy, they hang upon the bosom of their Lord, feel that they cannot give up the conflict, and exclaim, though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee—and with holy fervency resolve, "*I will not let thee go, except thou bless me!*" Thus they have the pure spirit of supplication. This is cleaving to God, when our hearts and our hands are broken off from every other confidence. This is prayer. This is the prayer of faith. This is wrestling like Jacob, and prevailing like Israel.

*And what are the grounds we have to hope that they who thus seek the Lord shall not seek in vain?*

When men possess this spirit of sincerity, of earnestness, of humility and dependence; and especially, when they become confident that their success does not depend on their own exertions, and yet still continue to strive with God; they shall receive his blessing. Jacob saw that his own strength was gone, but he also knew that the mercy of God was not exhausted. It was at this critical moment, that his faith and hope fastened on the divine compassions and faithfulness, and he resolved he would not cease his supplications. Yea, his resolute and determined faith could say, "I will not let thee go until thou bless me!" And God blessed him there. His name was no more Jacob, but Israel. Every true Israelite, who, like Jacob, wrestles with God in a spiritual agony, importunately pleading for mercy, and resolving not to desist from his most fervent supplications, shall find favor. Those who so address his throne as to show that they are in earnest,—that they truly rely upon his mercy,—that they cannot be denied his favor,—that they never will give up their entreaties, shall be heard. That prayer of faith, which as it were takes hold of the desired favor, apprehends the divine promise, and tests the divine mercy and faithfulness, will always prevail.

This is the supplication which God has re-

quired, and to which he has made promises of acceptance. He has said, "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest." The same truth our blessed Lord teaches in his own admirable manner. "And he spake a parable unto this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. Saying, There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a certain widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary. And he would not for awhile: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming, she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you, he will avenge them speedily." To the same purpose, he also spake another parable, saying, "Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me and I have nothing to set before him; and he from within shall answer, saying, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are now with me in bed, I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give

him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him, as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

The kind and gracious Lord has always allowed himself to be influenced and overcome by his dear children. The intercessions of Abraham so far prevailed upon him to spare the cities of the plain, that he said he would not destroy them, if ten righteous men could be found there. The intercessions of Moses influenced him to spare the idolatrous Israelites at Sinai. The prayers of Joshua influenced him to arrest the sun and moon in their orbits, until he had vanquished the enemies of his people. The prayers of David intercepted the blow of the destroying angel, when he stood with a drawn sword over Jerusalem. "Elias, a man of like passions with us, prayed that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth for the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again that it might rain, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. Thus the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Though there may be reasons why God should delay to answer prayer, yet he will answer it, if

we remain importunate. Such is the gracious constitution which he has condescended to establish in his spiritual kingdom. He has given us energy and efficiency to prayer. It is the surest weapon in the Christian armory. While those whose hearts are unhumbled and unbelieving, ask and receive not; those who come to God through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and importunately plead for his blessing, shall not be sent empty away, but shall prove by their own experience, that "the Lord is nigh unto those that fear him, and saveth them that be of an upright heart."

Christians may learn from the example of Jacob that they ought always to pray and not to faint. We cannot live a day without seeing some object of prayer;—something for which it is proper for us to make supplication to God. Either in our own state and circumstances, in those with whom we are particularly connected, in those of society in general, or in those of the church of God, we may constantly see much which should excite the purest feelings of our souls, and call forth our most fervent and importunate intercessions. The demand on this duty is universal, and never will cease. The helpless infant is not half so dependent on a mother's care, as every son and daughter of Adam is dependent on God. No state of mind is more becoming our character or our condition than this habitual tendency to look away from

earth to heaven. Nor is it enough that the emotions of a pious mind are expressed in those occasional aspirations, which we call ejaculatory prayer. The soul is often too full to be satisfied with this, and longs to be alone, that she may give vent to her desires in seasons of deliberate and special supplication. And in this delightful duty, who that is a child of God will not engage often? Deliverances that we do not ask for, mercies that we never supplicate, are not so fraught with blessing as those which are granted us in answer to prayer. God's choicest favors are reserved for those who ask for them in faith. The neglect of prayer always induces him to hide his face from us. It is this that accounts for the low state of religion in our own souls and in the souls of those who are around us. We cannot have joy in God, and walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, without great constancy in prayer. No temptations from within or from without, should induce us to cease wrestling with God.

It is a great privilege for the people of God to have the comfortable assurance that he has heard their supplications. They may have it. Those who have the spirit of prayer are not only sure of meeting the divine approbation and favor, but often do they receive some pledge of them, and bear in their own bosoms some memorial that God has been with them. In the morning after

the memorable night in which Jacob prevailed with God, the patriarch passed over the brook Jabbok to rejoin his family, just as the sun rose, and "he halted upon his thigh." The conqueror came off the field with marks of triumph; but with an eternal memento of his own weakness, and of the divine power and mercy. He was reminded of *Peniel* as long as he lived, where "he had seen God face to face, and his life was preserved." He had perpetual evidence that he had been engaged in a successful conflict with *One* who could have crushed all his hopes, but who gave him power, and enabled him to prevail. He carried about with him perpetual evidence of being the "worm Jacob," though his name was changed to *Israel*, a prince, or a conqueror of the Most High.

Just so is it with the people of God in every age of the world. The memorial of their victory is a token of their impotence. The best assurances they have that they have been successful in their supplications, are a deep sense of their own unworthiness and of the infinitely free, rich grace of God that they are what they are. The mark of victory is the mortification of a proud and selfish heart. As surely as we feel any disposition to take the credit of auspicious events to ourselves, or to think that God has produced them in consequence of our goodness, so sure we may be that he has not done it in answer to our prayers. To have

any comfortable assurance that he has heard the voice of our supplications, or that he has granted mercy to us, or to others in answer to our petitions, we must see that we earnestly desired it—that we humbly prayed for it—that we expected it only on the ground of God's sovereign mercy—that we have done nothing to merit it—that we are humbled under a view of receiving it—and that we are inclined from the heart to ascribe it all to his sovereign mercy, through the mediation of his dear Son. As far as these emotions exist in our bosoms in reviewing the attainment of any object for which we have prayed, may we hope that it has been in answer to our prayers.

It is not difficult, therefore, to see why the people of God receive so few answers to prayer. Christians frequently fail in their applications to the throne of grace. And the reason always is, *they ask amiss*. It is no difficult matter to tell why so many walk in darkness—go mourning all the day—attend the appointed ordinances of the gospel and find them barren—why there is so little attention to religion—why so few are awakened—and so few find mercy, in the midst of so many prayers. We fail in this one thing; confidence in ourselves and distrust in God. There is very little of Jacob's spirit and very little of the memorials of his success. We must see Christians *halting* more than we do, before we discover any remark-

able answers to prayer. Though the Lord's arm is not shortened, nor his ear heavy; and though Christians may appear to be somewhat fervent and zealous; they must be brought to lose all their strength, or their prayers will not "avail much." How often do good men pray God that he would quicken their own souls—that he would pour out his Spirit and revive his work—that he would bring men to the knowledge and love of the truth—that he would send out his light and grace to the dark portions of the earth;—and how many sacrifices do they make and how much opposition do they withstand in pursuing this hallowed work; yet how frequently does the prospect darken, rather than grow brighter? The truth is, they are looking the rather to see the effect of their own exertion, than the effect of divine power and grace. There may be great wrestlings with God; but there must be also the dislocating touch to wither the confidence of human strength. We have other lessons to learn beside those we have learned. We must yet see that Zion is built up "not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of God." We must feel that we are in the hands of God—that he exercises his own sovereign pleasure—that he has mercy on whom he will have mercy—and that if our prayers are heard, it will be entirely owing to his grace in Christ Jesus, and not to anything we have done, or can perform. It

may appear paradoxical that we must strive, and yet be sensible that we have no power of our own; but it is no greater paradox than that uttered by the Apostle, when he said, "When I am *weak*, then am I *strong*." The Christian's conscious weakness is the very secret of his strength. It is when his own fond and presumptuous confidence is as the spider's web, that he is most cheered with the thought that he has omnipotence to lean upon. It is only then that he who is of yesterday and knows nothing, a creature of want, infirmity and sin, becomes peaceful in God's love, wise in his wisdom, mighty in his strength. This is the truest, the happiest, the most cheerful and most effective Christianity. Nothing discourages, intimidates, crushes the spirit of such prayers; nor does anything disturb its sweet and heavenly serenity. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, for thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff." "He that is feeble shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of Jehovah."

May not these thoughts address conviction and reproof to those who are habitually unmindful of the duty of prayer? Are there not those who are thus unmindful? Yet are you the creatures of God. In his hand your breath is, and by his constant and powerful visitation, you are every moment preserved in existence. He is the author of all your

mercies ; and yet *he* is the being whom of all others you can forget and disregard. You do not thank him for anything ; you do not ask him for anything. You do not supplicate his favor ; you do not deprecate his displeasure. You do not venerate his excellence ; you do not magnify his name. No, God is not in all your thoughts. You do not desire to draw near to him, but to keep far from him. When you rise up and when you lie down, you forget God. Your hearts, your closets, your families, all bear testimony that you are afraid of coming into the divine presence. In the hour of danger, you can cry for mercy, and vow that you will not forget your obligations if you are delivered out of it; but in a little time, you are as thoughtless and prayerless as ever. Allow me to ask you, is such a course of conduct what God deserves at your hands ? Is it not undutiful ? If your child should treat you as you have treated God, would you not reproach him as a most undutiful child ? Is it grateful, thus to disregard the divine hand and cherish no sense of your obligations to the good Being who has done more for you than all the universe beside ? Can you justify such a prayerless life ? Does your conscience feel satisfied ? Do you never fill your own bosoms with reproach, when you recollect how you abuse the Father of mercies ? Can you be satisfied thus to live, without the love

of God in your hearts, and the fear of God before your eyes ?

Are you happy ? Have you any solid ground of hope, either for the life that now is, or that which is to come ? Do you feel prepared to die, and to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ ? In your rapid and unobstructed passage to the grave, are you satisfied that all will be well ? Tell me, immortal man ! do you never fear lest God may treat you, as you have treated him, and after all your thoughtlessness, that you may become an inhabitant of that world, where there is none to pity and relieve you, and where hope never comes ? How wretched must be that condition, which affords no pleasing reflections, no hopeful prospects ? Cease to do evil and learn to do well ! When God says, *Seek ye my face*; let your hearts reply, *Thy face, O Lord, will we seek.*

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### The First Rebuke of a Dying Father.

JUST before the death of Jacob, and during his last illness, as the custom of the Hebrews was, he called his sons together to give them his parting blessing. In doing this, the aged patriarch appears to have been inspired with a prophetic tongue, and while he described with great accuracy and faithfulness the peculiar characteristics of his sons, he predicted what should befall them for a great while to come.

*Reuben*, his first-born, was the son of Jacob and Leah. We know nothing of his character except what is given us in the Mosaic history. The detail of a part of his life as found in the apocryphal book called "The testament of the twelve patriarchs," is too fanciful and spurious to be accredited. To say nothing here of the shameful crime which led his father to animadvert on his conduct with so much severity, we are informed that he was a man of *no stability* of character. He was precipitate, undula-

ting, incoherent and unsolid as water. On this account he was premonished that he should not excel; and on this account, he did in fact lose his birth-right and all the privileges of primogeniture. The birth-right was given to Joseph, the kingdom to Judah, and the priesthood to Levi. The tribe of Reuben was never very numerous, and never rose to any eminence in Israel. They had their inheritance beyond Jordan, between the brooks Arnon south, and Jazer north, environed by the mountains of Gilead on the east, and bounded by Jordan on the west. When Moses took the census of the tribes in the wilderness, this tribe was not so numerous by one third, as either Judah, Joseph, or Dan, and it was among the first that was carried into captivity. When and where Reuben died, we have no account, and where his descendants are dispersed at the present day, no man can tell.

It was an affecting scene, when the venerable patriarch, in that land of strangers, called his twelve sons around his bed to listen to the last words which he would ever utter, and that he might "tell them that which should befall them in the last days." There is an extent of prediction here uttered which covers the future history of the twelve tribes of Israel, and which, so far as that history is not lost, and the lines of demarcation between them blotted out by their disper-

sion, has been in a most remarkable manner fulfilled.

In uttering these predictions, it is not Jacob himself who speaks, so much as the God of Jacob; it is not so much the father, as the Spirit of prophecy from the dying father's lips. Reuben was not the favorite son; nor was he unbeloved; in some respects, he was his father's pride, because he was the first-born. If he was rebuked, it was in the spirit of parental impartiality, and truthful prediction. He was entitled to the precedence among his brethren; and this his father acknowledged. "Reuben, thou art my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power." But notwithstanding this, for the sins of former years, and for his existing imperfections, he and his tribe were to become an insignificant, if not a degraded people. They were painful words which fell upon the ear of this disappointed and mortified son, at the hour when he probably hoped that his former wickedness had been forgotten, and that he might receive his dying father's blessing. They were few, but emphatic words: "*Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.*" There is no reason to question his piety; but he was an unstable man, and could never attain any pre-eminence.

The religion of the gospel, while it effects a

radical transformation in men, does not root out what is peculiar to their natural and individual character. The natural character is affected and modified, and indeed directed by religion; and so is religion affected and modified by the peculiarities of natural character. When the principles and spirit of Christianity are engrafted upon superior powers of mind, other things being equal, it turns out to be piety of a superior order. When we see it engrafted upon habits of caution and diligence, we expect to see it pursuing the same wise and diligent course in the church of God, which it pursued in the world. When we see it engrafted upon great firmness and fortitude, we expect to see the same vigor and invincible firmness consecrated to the noblest ends. We find such piety as this in the church in every age, and we read of it in the history of such men as Abraham and Moses, and Caleb and Joshua, and Paul and John in the sacred Scriptures.

There is an instability of Christian *feeling* in good men that does not always deserve the opprobrium of instability of character. The best of men are not altogether strangers to the alternations of hope and fear, joy and sorrow, religious excitement and religious apathy; nor will they be divested of them so long as they inhabit the earthly house of this tabernacle, nor until their religious emotions run in that more equable course which,

like the water of life, flows "clear as crystal from the throne of God and the Lamb."

When we speak of Christian instability, we speak of a more definable and tangible thing, and of something which is more easily detected, and capable of being more successfully controlled. We speak rather of the instability of Christian *practice*, than the instability of Christian affection. Some Christians are uniform and consistent in all their deportment. They are everywhere known as firm and stable men; they are not carried about either by every wind of doctrine, or every varying breeze of novelty. By what we know of their character, it is no difficult matter to tell where we shall find them, and what part they will act under their varied, and it may be unexpected responsibilities. No matter what the circumstances are in which the providence of God places them, everywhere they discover the same integrity and firmness. You need only ask, whether they have had opportunity to form their own opinions, and to concert their own plans of conduct, in order to be satisfied as to the course they will pursue. In matters of indifference, they can become all things to all men; while in matters of principle, they possess invincible firmness. Everywhere they are the same men; in the world and in the church; in their families and in the more extended circles of their friends; during the

week and on the Lord's-day. In their religious duties and religious relations, you find them where they ought to be,—in their own places of worship, and sustaining by their example the ministrations and services to which they have pledged their influence. On all occasions and in all circumstances, they are the same consistent, steadfast men.

All are not like these. Some there are who have no settled opinions of their own, and who are easily drawn away by error and delusion. If they have the faith, they do not always keep the faith; and if they hear the truth, they sometimes indulge their love of novelty, and are found listening to error. There is a class of professed Christians who are a sort of religious adventurers. They are disentangled from all the shackles of religious habit; and while they "prove all things," fail of "holding fast that which is good." They are not the most scrupulous men in the world; and easily persuade themselves that the most pliable religion is the most amiable and attractive, because it least thwarts their inclinations. They mean to be good Christians; but to accommodate their principles and conduct to the spirit of the times. They take no pains to control and influence this spirit, but, in their amiable weakness, submit themselves to its control. On the Lord's-day, they are at the church; on a week-day, they may be found at the theatre. Sometimes you

see them instructing a Sabbath-school, and sometimes leading down the dance; sometimes at the communion-table, and sometimes at a party of whist. Sometimes they accuse themselves for these inconsistencies, but have no firmness to resist the next temptation to repeat them. They are perpetually varying in their deportment. They are very conscientious in some things, and very loose and inconsiderate in others. They are sometimes right and sometimes wrong. They are firm as the hills at one moment, and unstable as water at the next. They are the creatures of circumstance. They are perpetually changing their associates, shifting their place of worship, now belonging to one party and now to another. They are just what their condition and their own unstable heart makes them. They are "double-minded men"—men who seem to have two souls. They are perpetually changing the objects of their affection, their opinions, their plans; so that they seem to be under the control of two minds—one leading them this way and another that. They are sad and guilty alternations between God and Mammon. They are neither safe guides nor constant disciples. This want of stability is a great and common imperfection in men professing godliness.

It may not be an unprofitable inquiry, to propose for a few moments' consideration, *what are*

*some of the causes and incentives to this instability?* When we speak of these, of instability in religion, we do not mean those unavoidable hindrances to a uniform and steady practice of the duties of piety, to which all men are exposed, and which from their nature are beyond control; but those causes which never exist without our own consent, and which it is always in our power to remove. That which operates most generally and most effectually, is *the scanty attainments in personal religion.* It is because Christians have so little constancy and perseverance in the graces of the Spirit, that they are so unstable in Christian duties. If they were always in the actual exercise of holy affections, they could not fail to be more firm and undeviating in practice. The best of men have but little religion, and give but very imperfect illustrations of its power; while the still more painful truth may not be suppressed, that the unstable often furnish, both to themselves and to others, too much reason for the apprehension that they have a name to live while they are dead. It requires more than a profession of godliness, and more than a few evanescent religious hopes, to "stand fast and quit ourselves like men." Tried piety is the most stable piety. The man who is not moved by the changeful maxims of a world that lieth in wickedness, must enjoy large measures of the favor of God; while to enjoy large

measures of his favor, he must possess more than ordinary piety. He must be a man of heroic faith and fervent prayer, if his course is steadfast. He will never be stable in the varied and self-denying duties of the Christian life, unless he loves them; and I need not say that it is no ordinary piety whose "meat is to do the will of God." There are many seasons in the religious experience even of good men, when they are at such a distance from God, that they take little pleasure in doing his will. Instead of girding up their loins for the great battle of human life, and pressing onward and upward, they hesitate and falter in the conflict. They put off their armor, relax their exertions, and let their light go out like other men.

But while this is the most obvious cause of instability, and so obvious, that it is almost identical with the effect, there are causes that are less obvious and more subtle. There is a strong tendency in the minds of good men *to form an undue and disproportional estimate of high religious frames and feelings.* This exposure is perhaps natural to them as sensitive beings, while it is often strengthened and superinduced by false views and erroneous teaching. Yet is this a topic on which we would speak with caution. The Scriptures, as well as Christian biography, furnish some of the most exemplary and delightful examples of true piety, by exhibiting the strength and ardor of

these internal emotions, which are the fruit of the Spirit. Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, and John were not less distinguished by those spiritual frames of mind which they so habitually enjoyed, than by that stability of character by which their light still shines on this ungodly world. It forms, indeed, one of the most important doctrines of the Bible, that true religion consists mainly in the gracious affections of the soul ; nor is any one of its duties more frequently inculcated, than the duty of a glowing love, a melting penitence, and a rapturous joy in God. Yet no divine teachings have been more abused and perverted than these by a certain class of minds. There are those who, to the comparative neglect of every outward duty, think little of religion that does not enjoy, and does not express itself in, the ecstacy of religious feeling. The consequence is, they make this state of mind the highest point of attainment. This is the great object of their reading and inquiry, of their prayers and their labor. The books that excite them, the preaching that excites them, and the scenes, and religious scenery by which they are most excited, form, in their judgment, the only fitting instruction, because they furnish the only incentives by which this high state of religious feeling can be produced and sustained. Yet is it a very possible thing for this state of mind, even with Christians who are not uninformed, to be over-

rated. I have not always found the most excitable to be the most uniform and stable. I have seen so many instances in which one hour's high religious enjoyment seemed to be regarded as a sort of offset to trifling offences and serious omissions of duty, that I look upon this mere excitability with something like apprehension. Of one thing I am well satisfied, that a disproportioned estimate of religious frames and experiences is very apt to be associated, if not with a proportioned depreciation, with something like negligence of moral duties. Christians who think mainly of their frames and feelings are not always the most watchful and conscientious in regard to what they do, and leave undone. To devote their solicitude, their labor, their prayer, and their life to an uninterrupted and persevering series of benevolent and self-denying effort, is not unfrequently with them a secondary thing, and an inferior expression of the Christian piety. They will not reprobate it as a parade of religion; but it holds a subordinate place in their thoughts. And this error very naturally gives rise to a discernible inconstancy of practice and instability of character. Christians are not always on the Mount; and if their character is no more stable than their frames and feelings, it may be unstable as water. With such misconceptions as these, though they may not degenerate into immorality, and neglect the external services

of religion, they will not be uniform and constant. They will now and then break out in some quick vibrations, some unexpected coruscations of piety, but will hold forth no strong and steady light. They will read and pray only when they feel like it. They go to church only when they feel like it. They govern and catechize their children only when they feel like it. They give to the cause of God, and visit the widow and fatherless in their affliction, and keep themselves unspotted from the world, only when they feel like it. They will labor and be indefatigable for a little while; but when the fever is over, they relapse into death-like stupor.

Another cause of this instability will be found in the abuse of several Christian doctrines. One of these is the doctrine of justification by faith. Men sometimes say, since we are not justified by anything we have done or can perform, it is of little consequence whether we are constant and uniform in our practice or not. So long as we do not fall into presumptuous sins, and preserve the purity and evidence of our Christian standing, it is not necessary that we should be unduly scrupulous and undeviating in works of righteousness. It is not necessary in order to be saved, never to fail in Christian duty. If they only build on the sure foundation it is enough. It is a secondary consideration with them to be burning and shining

lights in the earth, or to be firm and unwavering in their progress toward heaven.

The doctrine of the saints' certain and final perseverance in holiness is also a doctrine which is liable to the same perversion. That doctrine is, that where God of his infinite mercy has begun a work of grace in the heart, he will carry it on to the day of redemption ; so that none of those who are once renewed, shall finally fall away so as to perish. There may be those who are so unwise to believe that if God has covenanted to keep them there is no necessity of keeping themselves ; forgetting that one of the appointed means by which God has promised to keep them is their own diligence and care. Sometimes they act under very gross misconceptions of this truth, and then they are remiss and indifferent to their duty ; and then again *ashamed* of their abuse of divine goodness and *weary* of their wanderings, they return to their duty with new zeal and high promise. They have no stability. Their goodness is like the early cloud and morning dew which quickly passeth away.

The same abuse is made by multitudes of the doctrine of human dependence. They can do nothing. They are altogether dependent on the grace of God. It is not for them to maintain unchanging constancy. We do not say that a man who is thus influenced, is not a Christian ; but we

do say that he is in danger of great inconstancy. He will vacillate between a view of his obligations on the one hand, and his dependence on the other ; and overlooking the combined and steady influence of both, he will possess everything but stability and decision.

These doctrines are true ; but like every other truth, they are often abused. One would think, that they are in their own nature fitted to produce the very opposite effect from that to which we refer. The encroachments of sin must be very artful, and the heart very accessible to the influence of error, where truths like these, which furnish the grand encouragement to holy living, are made the occasion of carelessness and instability. If these doctrines are true, who would think of gaining the prize, without reaching the goal ? of wearing the crown, without achieving the victory ? They do indeed teach us, that the most aspiring and confident must " work out his salvation with fear and trembling ;" but they also teach us, that " when we are weak, then are we strong." They do indeed teach us, that on the slippery ascent to heaven it behooves us to " take heed lest we fall ;" but they also teach us the value and power of the truth, " Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

Another cause of this instability is, that *good men so often underrate their own exertions*. No man is too humble, nor can he ever be too

thoroughly divested of self-sufficiency. Pride and self-dependence are the bane of those graces, and that patient and undiscouraged effort which form the most symmetrical and stable Christianity. But we have yet to learn that it savors of this presumptuous spirit, to aim at the prize of our high calling, or to make our arrangements for laborious effort, and rich results. Who should aim at this, if not a redeemed sinner? Who has the warrant so to do, and the means and motives of doing it, and the promised grace to stimulate him, if not the Christian? There are elements in Christianity that are fitted to originate the highest purposes, and to form the noblest character. We may not allow ourselves to say that others, more favored and more worthy, may do something in the world; and that, if we may but be enabled to take care of our own single selves, it is as much as we hope to accomplish. How many are there who say, Even should we attempt to be laborious and useful, it will be of very little account. With such self-distrust, it is no wonder they are unstable. Now and then they try to accomplish, but their exertions soon die away in the exclusive care of their own souls.

The most fruitful cause of instability, and the last I shall mention is, *impatience of fatigue and weariness of labor.* This, after all, is the source of almost all the inconstancy in Christian practice.

Christians are willing to watch and labor a little while ; but are not willing to do it from day to day, from month to month, and from year to year. It costs too much time, too much care, and self-denial, and too many sacrifices. They are willing to take their part in Christian labor ; but to be always employed, and ever bearing the heat and burden of the day, is more than the church or the world has the right to look for. They are weary in well-doing. They attend to their duty under the incitement of favored impulses ; but instead of being the same uniform, steadfast men, are engaged in the good work only by fits and starts. They are unstable as water.

But we may not dismiss the general topic which has called forth the preceding observations without devoting a few thoughts to the consideration of *the evils* of this instability. The patriarch expressed them in few words : “Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.”

It is the privilege of those who maintain a consistency and uniformity of Christian character, to be numbered among the excellent of the earth ; while those who are inconstant and unsteadfast, though they may have good qualities, excel in nothing. They have no pre-eminence. They are neither eminently good, happy, nor useful.

They are not *eminently good*. One reason why there are comparatively so few examples recorded

in history of genuine *instability* of character is, that men of vacillating purpose never rise to sufficient eminence to find a place on the pages of history. Those there are who figure on its pages, that are distinguished for wickedness; but they are men of strong and steady purpose. Those there are also whose names are recorded by historians on account of the eminence of their stations; men of hereditary rather than real greatness; men who are born to the throne, and whose names are handed down to us as *princes* rather than *men*. *John*, of England, called *John Lackland*, has a place in English history, because he was England's king, and not because he was distinguished for his kingly virtues. He was weak in mind, changeable in purpose, and distinguished for his fickleness and levity. He could quarrel with the pope, and then kneel at his feet and resign his crown into his hands. He could quarrel with the barons, and then give them the *Magna Charta*. He could enter into a secret league with the king of France against his father *Henry II.*, and then quarrel with the French king. *Christiana* of Sweden became tired of the throne, and then resigned it; after she had resigned it, nothing was more earnestly sought by her than the resumption of her crown. She publicly abjured Protestantism, and became a Papist. And at last she quarrelled with the pope, and then on

her death-bed received absolution from his pen. Characters like these can never rise to eminence. We may say of them as the historian says of Christiana, "Philosophy is in their mouth, folly in their head, and pride in their heart."

Nor is it otherwise in the religious world. Good men there are who are never eminent, because they are unstable. Their attainments in true religion and moral virtue are all of the lower order. It is but too obvious that they aspire after quite diminished measures of holiness. They are not like Paul, "forgetting the things that are behind, and pressing onward to those that are before;" but rather like the fickle Israelites, or the changeful Samaritans, who "feared the Lord and served their own gods." The history of the church records the names of those who would have been eminent for goodness but for their unhappy instability of character. Archbishop Cranmer would have been one of the noblest men of his age had he possessed the uniformity and firmness which belongs to true Christianity. He advocated Henry's divorce from his lawful queen, with the view of his marriage with Anne Boleyn, and then formally pronounced that marriage null and void. From being a Catholic, he became a Protestant; from Protestantism, he went back to the faith of Rome; and at his martyrdom finally renounced the faith of Rome, and died a professed Protestant.

Every part of man's moral character is affected by this equivocal and unstable spirit. The perfection of goodness consists in the constant and uniform exercise of it; and the farther Christians are from a stability in the practice of the Christian virtues, the greater remove are they from true excellence. If a good man would grow in grace, and become eminent for piety, he must be above the reach of those passing winds which change the course of less decided and stable men. He may not be a man of changeful emotions, fickle purposes, or inconstant and doubtful life. I say inconstant and doubtful life, because no means are better adapted to their end, than an unwearied, steadfast attention to laborious and self-denying duties, is adapted to the advancement of personal holiness. Let a man be fickle here, and he will be subject to great mutability and vicissitude of character. He will be like Ephraim,—“a cake not turned;” parts of his character will be deficient; he will be sound in some respects and unsound in others. He will possess little of the vigor, and exhibit little of the finished beauty and excellence of true religion. He will very easily be led away by the error of the wicked, and fall from his own steadfastness. He will scarcely go from strength to strength. Even should his path toward Zion be on the whole like the rising light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day, it will be

so broken with clouds, and so eclipsed by shadows, as to be sometimes dark at noon-day. He will live and die with little piety; and when he has finished his course, instead of having fought a good fight, he will but just have escaped the snare, and delivered his own soul.

Persons of this unstable character *never become eminently happy*. They are happy, only as they are good, occasionally and by accident. They have no solid, permanent source of enjoyment. They are tossed about in their hopes and comfort, just as they are in their feelings and practice. Few Christians have greater darkness, more doubts, or deeper depression and perplexity, than those whose spiritual comforts are enfeebled by the instability of their purposes and conduct. You do not find men who partake of the characteristic firmness and perseverance of the Apostle Paul, involved in darkness and gloom. There is a pleasure, a devout satisfaction in the constancy of Christian benevolence, and patience of Christian labor, which are unknown to men of the opposite spirit. There is something in the steadiness of such a pursuit, which raises the heart to familiar intercourse with things unseen, elevates the mind above the clouds that hang over the multitudes beneath, and leads the soul out from its dark caverns into the full light of the divine countenance. It is this mutability of Christian deportment, this al-

ternate labor and sloth, this excitement and weariness, this sinning and repenting, that lays the heart open to such painful self-reproach ; that invites temptation from without and within ; that provokes God to hide his face, and dooms so many to fear and bondage. Their comforts are fluctuating—now in God and now in the world, ever ebbing and flowing like the tide. Such a man is not a happy Christian while he lives, nor can he die as it is the privilege of a Christian to die. He has no settled peace, because he has never accustomed himself to *rest* upon anything. He vibrates between hope and fear. He passes away in darkness ; and cannot say, “Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.” If it is true that men generally die as they have lived, who would be an unstable Christian ?

Persons of this character *never become eminently useful*. They may do good, but it is on a very moderate scale. Their plans of usefulness are seldom enlarged ; and when they are, they have not fixedness of purpose enough to carry them into execution. Men who to any great extent have denied themselves, and have been actuated by a compassionate love for mankind ; who have adorned the doctrine of God their Saviour ; who have shone as lights in the world, and led others to glorify their Father who is in heaven ; have been men of great uniformity and firmness. How can

that man to any considerable extent consult the great, permanent, eternal interests of his fellow-men, who thinks of a life of self-renunciation to-day, and loses sight of it to-morrow?—who is all zeal and engagedness at this moment, and all apathy and sluggishness the next? No matter in what department of Christian duty a man wishes to be useful, an inconstant mind will spoil all his plans. Such a man very soon learns that he cannot trust himself, and is therefore afraid to enter with resolution into any purposes of enlarged and patient effort, lest he should not hold out to the end. And if he does not learn to distrust himself, his fellow-Christians soon learn to withdraw their confidence from him, and he is consigned to fill up here and there the interstices of some benevolent enterprise, rather than be prominent in achievements that bless mankind.

History furnishes us with many noble examples of the stability of Christian character, which time would fail me to enumerate. There are few finer examples in our own days, than are presented by the patient and indefatigable firmness of not a few devoted missionaries of the cross, who, while so many have retired from the field because they did not count the cost of entering it, have persevered in their work of faith and labor of love, who have grown gray in the self-denying service, and whose “hoary head is a crown of glory,” because still

found in the way of righteousness. We need such men at home and abroad. They need not be men of the most commanding talent ; but they should be men of patient toil and invincible firmness. They should be men who live not for themselves, but for Christ and his church. They should be men, not of “one idea,” but of one supreme object ; men whose enterprise may supply the place of superior genius, and whose strong common sense and devoted piety render them eminently useful. Their very goodness and stability will give them talent and attainments, and teach them to employ them to the best advantage. We need ministers, and ruling elders, and members in the church of God, who will be to her what Gustavus Adolphus was to Sweden, and what Washington was to his country. We need men whose stability is moved by no scenes of trial, whose views may be counted on amid all the vacillations of public opinion, whose deeds of love and mercy, and whose achievements of Christian valor and disinterested zeal shall show, that whoever may be against them, God is for them ; men whose firmness is more impenetrable than the shield of Ajax, and whom a greater than Hercules wrapped in the skin of the Nemean lion.

We have seen enough of unstable Christians and unstable ministers. If they have a momentary influence, it is only to keep the church in tumult

and the world in gazing agitation. Their course is like the comet's path, vivid and brilliant for the moment, but leaving no bright track behind them. Such men are the mere appendages to every thing that warms the hearts, enlivens the hopes, and saves the souls of men. They exert very little influence on their own generation, or any that comes after them.

What then is *the remedy for this* unhappy trait of character? On this part of the subject we will suggest the following considerations.

If you would guard against instability in religion, *see that you are Christians*. Men will have very little constancy and firmness in practice, unless they are "rooted and grounded in love." If they are habitually embarrassed and doubtful of the genuineness of their own religion, they will be versatile and unsettled in their plans of usefulness and duty. They will have very little heart for steadfastness in labor, unless their purposes originate from holy love, and their measures are suggested and fortified by motives that are pure and disinterested. If a man's heart is right with God, the objects of his pursuit will be such as deserve and demand unwearied thought, and such as will be apt to inspire fixedness of purpose. If he himself has good evidence that it is right, he will spend and be spent with a satisfaction that gives energy and stability to all that he performs. Nothing

tends more to unman our courage, to take away our resolution and strength, than perpetual doubts about our personal religion. It is this which makes so many feel their unfitness for every duty, and renders so many mere cyphers in the church of God.

*Be established also in your religious principles.* As religious knowledge is the great auxiliary to advancement in holiness, so established principles are the great means of firmness in Christian duty. Let a man be unsettled in his religious opinions, and unless there is some powerfully counteracting cause, he will be proportionably unstable in his plans of duty and usefulness. The strength of his determination, and the vigor of his conduct, are in a great measure proportioned to the extent and certainty of his religious knowledge. Ignorance of the great doctrines of religion, and uncertainty as to the truth and importance of them, is but poorly calculated to present or to enforce the more powerful obligations, as well as the more resistless inducements to uniformity and perseverance.

*Aim also at great achievements.* “Expect great things; attempt great things.” It is in the attainments of the Christian character, as it is in everything else; men seldom advance beyond their expectations. They may not indeed arrive at the point at which they aim, but they will always rise higher than they would have done if they had projected a

feebler or lower purpose. It depends very much upon a man's own expectations and efforts whether he accomplishes little or much for the kingdom of Christ. Expectation animates effort; apprehension paralyzes it. A man's exertions and *prayers* almost always correspond with his expectations; so that if his expectations are high, they will buoy up his mind and keep it steady at its purpose; but if his expectations are low, they will only depress his mind, but shake, if not annihilate, his best purposes.

If you would guard against instability in religion, forget not to *count the cost*. Nothing of great moment can be accomplished without unshaken resolution. No Christian ever consecrated the prime of youth, the vigor of manhood, and the experience of age, to the noble purpose of glorifying his Redeemer without an inviolable purpose. There must be a fixed and steady attention to this great object. A slight and cursory view of our duty, a purpose that alters with every change of feeling or circumstances, is the very evil to be corrected. Nor can much be done toward remedying this instability without patient labor; because the great objects of Christian benevolence must be prosecuted with unabated exertion. Nor can much be done without some degree of ardor and zeal. Christian stability arises from a strong, steady, uniform, benevolent principle, uniting and

harmonizing everything in the pursuit of its object. If a man, therefore, would not be unstable, let him make up his mind to a life of steadfastness and toil. Let him lay his account with self-denial and difficulty. Let him come to his work desirous to spend and be spent in the service of his Lord and Master. Let his duty take entire possession of his soul, to the renunciation of everything that is inconsistent with his purpose, or unworthy of his high pursuit. Let his duty be the paramount, the absorbing consideration; and let it have weight and influence enough to awaken and invigorate all his powers and stimulate him to patient and persevering exertion.

And more than all, *have strong confidence in God*. This is the all-inspiring, all-conquering sentiment. A man can hardly be surprised into any great and sudden changes; he will with difficulty turn his attention to trifles, and reluctantly suffer his thoughts to be led away by vain and imaginary schemes to the neglect of any great design he has begun to prosecute, who is strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Our duty to God becomes the main business of life, and our devotion to his glory the continual source of enjoyment, so long as confidence in him remains the great incentive to exertion. No person will persevere in active usefulness without a proper feeling of his dependence. With an exclusive reliance on himself,

his expectations must be narrow and his exertions enfeebled. But with humble confidence on the God of all grace and wisdom, as the source of all his strength and the author of all his success, he can attempt; he can execute. If he has no well-grounded confidence in God, he will first waver, then relax his endeavors, then abandon them. Nothing tends so powerfully to strengthen and refresh the heart as the thought, "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." Nowhere is to be found so ready, or so effectual a preservative against discouragement and dejection. Nowhere is there a sentiment which can influence a good man to move forward with a firmer step, to encounter opposition, neglect or reproach with a bolder and more collected aspect, or to meet success with an humbler or more grateful mind.

I will only add to these suggestions, if you would guard against instability in religion, *preserve a deep sense of your obligations*. Every man is bound to steadfastness in the practice of holiness; much more, every Christian man. The same considerations which urge to duty at one time, urge to it at another, and without cessation and without end.

And what are these considerations? They are the commandment of the everlasting God, enforcing his reasonable claims upon his creature with a mighty persuasion and a resistless energy.

They are the love of Jesus Christ, superadding to the influence of moral obligation all the constraints of redeeming mercy.

They are the undeserved interposition of the Holy Spirit, quickening the soul from its death of trespasses and sins—redeeming it from the thraldom of Satan and the world—giving it the adoption of sons—conducting it in a course in which it is destined soon to bid a final adieu to guilt and wretchedness, and enter upon its everlasting progress in felicity and glory.

They are the most memorable and solemn engagements by which every professed disciple recognized his allegiance to the King of kings; by which he pledged his fidelity and obedience; by which he called heaven and earth to record that he would devote all that he is, or possesses, to the honor of God; and by which he made a free-will offering of his time, his talents, his influence, his learning, his skill, his labor, his property, his prayers, his life, to that cause for which his Redeemer suffered and died.

They are the interests of that Redeemer's kingdom on earth—the good he may accomplish and the evil he may prevent—the dearest interests which are identified with the existence of immortal men—the prosperity of the church and the salvation of the soul.

These are the obligations which bind the people

of God to unvarying constancy in the practice of godliness and the promotion of the highest good. And how can they be remembered, how can they have any weight and influence without discouraging the spirit of irresoluteness and versatility, and without inspiriting and invigorating the first and strongest emotions of the soul, and producing habits of action and usefulness as permanent as the power of exertion, as elevated as the object by which they are excited ?

If we mistake not, instability in religion is one of the characteristics of many a good man. Perhaps it is an error, that ought to be thought of by some of my readers. I would by no means exclude myself from the weight of this reproach, and I hope it may be felt by others. Does not God address us as he did Ephraim of old,— “O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee; for thy goodness is as the early cloud, and the morning dew, which quickly passeth away !” It is not an uncommon thing for Christians to possess strong and ardent affections ; but too often their religion almost evaporates in mere ardor and sensibility. It wants a steady and fixed attention to the great object of Christian benevolence ; and a constancy and energy which shall give it effect in the promotion of the cause of godliness. If any are thus unstable, all they have to do is to repent and reform. Your own religion, your own peace and comfort,

your usefulness in the world, the honor of God your Saviour, call upon you, in heart and in life, to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

I hope I shall be pardoned if I say, I am particularly anxious that the leading thoughts of this lecture should be remembered, especially by the young. You, my young friends, who have been recently brought into the school of Christ, and are now forming your habits as Christians, are entering upon a course in which you will probably travel on as long as you live. You have been eminently the objects of the divine favor; and the kind of religion you possess, the sort of character you form, the stability or instability of your practice, little as you may think of it, is yet to have a powerful influence on the church and the world. I would not have you aim to be great; but I would have you aim to be good. I would not have you aim at personal distinction, unless it be the eminence of humble, devoted, consistent piety. It is no impeachment of Christian modesty and humility to aspire after no common degree of usefulness. Eagerly as the men of the world, each in his different department, pants after wealth, influence, and fame, urged forward by raised expectations, and the prospect of ever-growing greatness, may you pant after greater constancy and uniformity of grace, and a life of invincible self-denial, and elevated virtue and usefulness. It is no difficult

matter for you to hide your talent in the earth, to be indolent, fearful, and effeminate ; to forget the high obligations of your profession, lose sight of the importance and greatness of the cause to which you are allied ; and it is also easy to think, and feel, and act as those who must give an account of their stewardship, and by your exemplary piety, your importunate prayers, your strenuous exertions, your resolute perseverance in doing good, exhibit to the world the reality and beauty of religion, as well as evince that in you it has found no timid, wavering advocate. Venture, my young friends, to think of being useful in the world. Set your mark high. Count the cost of your purpose ; estimate the value of a devoted life ; appreciate the blessings and honor of being co-workers with your God and Saviour, and the happiness, the glory of that hour, when, unworthy as you are, it shall be said to you, “ Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

## CHAPTER XXV.

### The First Rebellion in the Hebrew Commonwealth.

EVENTS often occur which make it the duty of the ministry of reconciliation to extend its instructions beyond the ordinary limits of Christian truth. There are great principles which lie at the basis of good government, and are so intimately involved with the best interests of the state, that they are the common inheritance of every citizen, and are in the keeping of every friend to his country. They are so inseparably allied to great religious and moral principles, that the pulpit has no right to stand aloof from them, and leave them to be defended only by statesmen, and upon principles of equity and expediency. To weigh them in a higher balance, to bring them to the ordeal which scrutinizes the relations of man to his Maker, cannot be considered as lying out of the sphere of Christianity.

In the following observations we shall make no

ultimate appeal, but to the word of God ; and if our remarks are submitted with freedom and firmness, it will be because we may appeal to such a standard, and because such is the state of our public affairs, that there is a special call in the providence of God for the ministers of religion to “magnify their office” by magnifying the supremacy of the laws.

There have been few such rulers as the great Jewish lawgiver ; few such philosophers, few such patriots, few such men. Though not faultless, his character is the most pure and immaculate ever drawn, either by profane or sacred historians. Yet was there nothing in his acknowledged integrity and heroism, nor in his well-known devotement to the best interests of the people of which he was the leader—nothing in his divine legation, which shielded *him* from the slanderous imputation of arrogance and the love of power, or the *government* he so wisely administered from mutiny and rebellion. At the head of these restless and seditious spirits were *Korah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram* ; the most distinguished and turbulent of them, strange to say, belonging to the “house of Levi.” They were competitors for power with Moses and Aaron ; they aimed to excite a popular tumult ; they formed a regular conspiracy, which threatened to overturn the whole system, civil and religious, which God had established among them ;

a conspiracy which aspired after lawless independence, and which was prepared to trample all law and order under their feet. Their sagacious prince saw, at a glance, the dark cloud that overshadowed the nation, and it affected him to solicitude, to humiliation, to prayer. He foresaw that the consequences might be disastrous, portending evil to the commonwealth of Israel; and he “fell upon his face” before God, to deprecate his wrath, and seek his direction in this new and unexpected crisis of his country’s history.

Such is the position of these American states at the present crisis. In the midst of prosperity such as is enjoyed by few, if any nations on the face of the earth, and with prospects such as never yet dawned even upon our own favored land; we are at the same time in the midst of those agitating scenes by which republics have been so often beguiled, misled, and betrayed into dissensions which were premonitory of their ruin. Our single object in the present chapter, is to pursue a course which may have the greatest tendency to make us familiar with our high duties as citizens; which may teach us to set a high value upon our institutions, and lead us to hand down to those who come after us a firm and compact government, wisely dispensed, not over a *disunited*, but a *united* people.

That we may lay the basis of our conclusions as

deep and broad as those conclusions themselves, our first object shall be TO ADVERT TO THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT AS THEY ARE REVEALED IN THE SACRED WRITINGS.

It would be not a little remarkable, if that God, who is the governor among the nations, had given no instructions in his word, in relation to the government of the nations themselves. Hence we find the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testaments by no means barren of instruction on this important article of human duty.

The *first* great truth which strikes us on opening the sacred volume, in relation to *civil government* is, that it is *an institution which God approves, and of his own appointment*. Look where we will over his vast universe, we see one class of existences subordinated to another class. Heaven itself is a governed community. Intelligences are there that are superior to other intelligences ; some angelic minds that are superior to other angelic minds ; “one star differing from another star in glory.” There are “thrones and dominions,” cherubim and seraphim, while one Lord God omnipotent rules over them all. The different physical and intellectual endowments of the human race, as well as their diverse condition in the world, all which are by the ordering of his wise providence, indicate that he designed them for a state of subordination. In a world like our own, fallen by its iniquity, and

where evil passions in every form are the ruling impulses of the human heart, *government* is essential to man's existence ; perfect anarchy would in a short time depopulate the earth.

The fact that the state of man everywhere *is a* state of subordination, speaks volumes in favor of the truth that his Maker designed him for such a state. The idea of subordination seems to be a sort of human instinct. The reason why the many are so easily governed by the few, is, that the necessity of government has so deep a lodgment in the human mind. For the most part, the superior power is on the side of the governed ; the strongest hold which rulers have of their subjects is their own sense of the absolute necessity of government. It is this which gives power to law ; and but for this, the many would be the governors, and the few the governed.

The only civil government of which the Scriptures give any account, was organized by God himself. They ascribe the civil institutions of the Hebrew State to the same divine Author, with its system of religion. Its basis was a true and proper theocracy ; God himself was their immediate sovereign, and they his subjects ; so that idolatry was a capital offence, and treason against the state.

Nowhere do we learn the qualifications of civil rulers, or the duties of their subjects, as we learn them from the Bible ; nor should we find these

instructions there, if civil government were not approved of God. The doctrine of the New Testament is, that "there is no power but of God;" that "the powers that be are ordained of God;" and that human government is "the ordinance of God." God announces in his word, "By me kings reign and princes decree justice." All government, in all the varied social relations, rests upon the same basis; it is of divine right. If this principle is denied, there is no such thing as lawful government in the world.

It is altogether a mistaken, unscriptural, and mischievous notion, that civil government has its origin in nothing higher than human compact. The particular form of government is of men; it is at the option of men, and the result of conventional arrangement and social compact; while *government* is of God. It is a divine institution; God is its author; that it should exist is not merely the decision of his providence, but his commanded will. A sheriff, no less than a king, acts by a divine commission.

The next truth which the Scriptures reveal on this subject, instructs us *what it is that constitutes civil government*. What this is, is a vexed question, and one to which philosophical and ethical writers have given very different answers; but to which the Bible invariably gives but one. The Scriptures inculcate the doctrine, that that which

constitutes the government is the government which is in actual possession of the civil authority; "THE POWERS THAT BE." They may come into power by the election of the people, by hereditary right, by ancient usage, by statute, by the nomination of their predecessors, by last will and testament, or even by conquest and usurpation; but so long as they are the *powers that be*, they constitute the divinely authorized government. The *authority* of the government is decided by the Scriptures; what *the government is*, is decided by providence. It is no proof that the Scriptures justify fraud and usurpation, because they give authority to the usurper and deceiver. The reigning prince may have adopted the most unwarrantable means for coming into power; but when the power is once confirmed and established in his hands, whether the people have been constrained to acknowledge his supremacy by circumvention on his part, or bad policy on their own; by his force, or their disunion and effeminacy; the government he exercises is the real government. Men are born under allegiance to their existing rulers, as truly as they are born under the bonds of reverence and duty to their parents.

Nor is it difficult to perceive that the only safe principle for a conscientious man to adopt in order to acknowledge the supremacy of the laws, is that they are the laws of the existing government.

The perplexity would be endless, if, in order to secure his allegiance, he must institute and decide the inquiry, who possesses, *de jure*, the civil power. The fact is, that almost all the governments that now exist, or of which there remains any records in history, were originally founded in usurpation or conquest. There never was in any one family, any long, regular succession in the Roman empire; their line of princes was continually broken, either by private assassinations, or public rebellions. The Praetorian guards, on the death of one emperor, set up another; the legions in the East a second; those in Germany a third; and the sword alone could decide the contest. John the Baptist recognized the authority of an usurper, when he said to the soldiers of Augustus, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." The Saviour recognized the authority of an usurper, when he said of the tribute money of Tiberius, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." William the Norman came to the throne of England by violence and usurpation; yet the existing government was the authorized government. The house of Lancaster governed England for sixty years, and was expelled by the house of York; both were usurpers; while both the red rose and the white were the badges of power, so long as their supremacy was recognized. Usurpers also have often made the best of rulers;

far better than many whose thrones they usurped. Augustus Cæsar came to the throne by violence; yet because the Roman dominion had become too unwieldy to be controlled by the republic, it was a blessing to Rome that, with all his faults, he came to the throne. Perhaps there never was a greater usurper than Oliver Cromwell; yet England was never better governed, and never more respected abroad, than during the Commonwealth. “Promotion cometh neither from the north, nor from the south, nor from the west; but God is the judge, he setteth up one, and putteth down another.” God speaks to the people in his providence, when he thus sets kings upon their thrones; and his voice thus uttered is made law by the Bible. Even where usurpers are the worst of men and the worst of kings, they are God’s ministers; and not until a nation reaches the point which calls for revolution and the overthrow of the existing government, may they practically call in question its supremacy.

Another truth, equally obvious from the Bible is, that *civil government is instituted for the good of the people*. The proper sphere and appropriate business of civil government are the civil and social relations of men. Its benevolent objects are secured by such a policy as tends to increase the population, promote the wealth, the knowledge, the moral virtue, the internal enterprise and ex-

ternal influence and honor of the governed, and in every way secure their temporal rights, quietude and welfare. It secures its objects just in the measure in which it makes obedience to the laws, the highest interest of the subject. In other and better language, it is "a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well." Rulers are "ministers of God" for this end, and are appointed for "this very thing." Their legitimate object is, not to seek their own advantage, but the general welfare of the people. *Salus populi, suprema lex.* Civil society is composed of so many distinct parts, and combines so many local, and often conflicting interests, that it requires great wisdom and impartiality, and not unfrequently makes exacting demands upon the spirit of mutual concession and compromise, so to consult, compare, and combine these interests, as to produce the highest good of *the whole*. The doctrine, of which we hear not a little in our day, that government may legislate for a part, and not for the whole, is not the doctrine of the Bible. Its whole spirit and the entire system of truth it reveals is a standing rebuke to this political error. The basis of all legislation by general laws admits of partial evil for the general good; and this is the only practical legislation.

In wise governments, the civil power is so employed as to promote the objects of government; its laws are fit, and suited to wise ends, and are

proper under the circumstances. They are the security of honest men; they guarantee property, peace, life; and are like "a city which hath gates and bars." That is more than a doubtful patriotism which loses sight of the general good as its ultimate object, and only seeks it so far as it will have a favorable aspect upon local, partial, or individual interests. Every lover of his country will seek the general good in preference to his own, and when the occasion demands it, at the sacrifice of his own partialities. It may be a difficult task to administer civil government upon this high and disinterested principle; it is certainly no enviable task; for it has very little else than virtue's own reward, and little other gratification than the indulgence, and expression, and results of a self-sacrificing spirit. There have been such rulers. Such was Moses; such was David; such was Sweden's pride, Gustavus Adolphus; and such was America's glory when her stripes and stars wafted far the fame of Washington. Such men and such governments are beautiful objects to look upon, and worthy to be remembered. Bad as the world is, it loves to cherish such sacred memories. "They are as the light of morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."

Still another principle is clearly revealed in the

Scriptures, nor is it one of minor consideration. It is, that *the authority of civil government is binding on the conscience, and that obedience to it is no less a moral, than a political duty.* This would be a fair and logical deduction from the foregoing remarks; but we may not dismiss so important a thought without establishing and enforcing it. We affirm that the Bible establishes the SUPREMACY OF THE LAWS; and that the subjects of every recognized government ought to obey them from a sense of moral obligation. The rights of the government and the duty of the subject rest on the same foundation—the revealed will of God. The government of law, so far as it regards its obligations on the conscience, is God's government.

There are important reasons why submission to the authority of civil government should be strongly inculcated in the sacred Scriptures. God would have those who fear him and love his Son, the known friends of law and order. It were a blow Christianity could never survive, if it were a disloyal religion, and if those who profess and those who preach it were disorganizers. If there be those who

“Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war,”

they must not be Christian men. Christian men must be men of peace. Modern infidels, and heathen politicians in times of old, were wont to repre-

sent the disciples of Jesus as a seditious community, as the enemies of Cæsar, and rebels against the laws of the land. Many a Christian has gone to the stake, and to the amphitheatre to be the sport of beasts of prey, because pagan disorganizers had the address to cast upon them the odium of their own seditions. Christianity, therefore, most distinctly disclaims all sympathy with the spirit and artifices of sedition in every form and degree. Wherever it exists, she condemns it. Whether found in the church, or out of it, she washes her hands of all this class of sins. She throws her guardianship alike around the emperor's throne, the mandate of every court of law, the exactions of the custom-house, and the execution of the constable.

The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Christians at Rome, and then under the government of one of her most arbitrary and cruel tyrants, uses such language as the following: "Let *every soul* be subject unto the higher powers; whoso resisteth the power, *resisteth the ordinance of God*; wherefore, ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but for *conscience' sake*." His example is one of the reasons why so many ministers of the gospel in this land have recently been employed in inculcating fidelity to the government, and the supremacy of the laws. It is a part of the gospel they preach, and a most important part of it; for where would be the unmolested opportunity of preaching that gospel,

and where its triumphs, without the protection of human laws? When the great Apostle of the Gentiles, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, was writing to a youthful minister of Christ, with a view of directing him how to conduct himself in his sacred office, instead of cautioning him not to intermeddle with political subjects, he solemnly requires him to admonish men everywhere of their duty to the civil power. He knew that the Christians would often be scandalized by the measures of the government; that they would be sufficiently sensitive to the wrongs they must suffer, and under strong temptations to a complaining, if not a mutinous spirit. And he knew that the inexperienced and warm-hearted young preacher to whom he was writing, would be far from being officious on so delicate a topic; and therefore he says to him, "*Put them in mind to be subject to principalities, and powers, and to obey magistrates.*" The language of the Bible to Christians everywhere is, "*Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors.*"

If you ask the question, *do then the teachings of the Bible bind men to obey a wicked law, and one that requires them to violate the law of God?* It were easy to give a categorical answer to this question, and quite as easy for that answer to be

perverted or abused. The law of God is superior to all other laws. When the only alternative is to obey God, or man; conscience has but one course to pursue. Here every man's conscience is supreme. His personal responsibility to God must forever remain untouched by human laws. "God alone is Lord of the conscience."

But when we say these things, we desire to be explicitly understood. A man may be conscientious in doing wrong; for we are told in the Scriptures, that "*there is a way that seemeth right to a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.*" When we say that God alone is Lord of the conscience, we may not forget, that for this reason he is *above* conscience. Men may err; God alone cannot err, and therefore his word alone is the ultimate resort. No man may appeal from God's word to conscience, or follow conscience in opposition to God's word. It is not enough for men to *think* they are right; they must *know* they are so before they may confide in the dictates of conscience; nor can they know this without knowing the mind and will of God.

It is true that no immoral law may bind the conscience; but it is not true that every man must judge of the morality of the laws of the land, unless he judges right, and in accordance with the Bible. If he has the word of God in his hands, and his conscience misleads him, he

is without excuse. Men may present false views to conscience; they may deceive conscience; and conscience is then no safe guide. There is no objection to men being "a law unto themselves," so long as they are right; if they are wrong, conscience is no law. The more erroneous a man's conscience is, and the more opposed to the Bible, and the more exacting and obdurate; the more fearfully does he sin.

We see no safe position to assume on this subject unless it be, that conscience is a safe guide only when it harmonizes with the word of God. Conscience, in India, requires the widow to burn herself on the funeral pile of her husband; in the South Sea Islands, it requires infanticide; in Africa, it requires that children destroy their aged parents. God himself pronounces a woe upon "them who call good evil, and evil good." Conscience may pronounce a perverted judgment, because it does not submit itself to the law of God. This moral chronometer must be rectified by the sun, else is it a false guide.

It is, therefore, very doubtful ground for a man to occupy, in such a land as this, where all the tendencies are to anarchy, and none of them to absolutism, when he undertakes to balance the obligation between those revealed laws, one of which requires him to obey the moral law, and the other of which requires him to obey the civil government.

Facts in abundance teach us, that in political dissensions, conscience is a very pliable and changeable thing. It may be impossible for civil government to frame its laws so as to suit *every man's conscience*; this would make individual conscience the law of the land, and be subversive of all civil government. When, therefore, conscience sits in judgment upon the mandates of the civil law, and purchases her freedom at the expense of penalty, the case must be as clear and palpable as that which drove Daniel to the den of lions, his three friends to the fiery furnace, and the apostles to the block. Even then, a conscientious man would be content to save his own single conscience harmless, without becoming an *open revolter* or the preacher of revolt. He would tread softly on such ground as this. All have not the same light; nor the same freedom from passion and prejudice; nor the same purity of motive and benevolence of spirit. If the government were to pass a law that no day should be regarded as sacred but the Lord's-day; it would admit of a question whether the Jew or the Mohammedan would be justified *in the sight of God* in resisting the law. Men should sometimes distrust their own consciences, and have some respect to the conscience of enlightened and good men. The instances are exceedingly rare in which a man is justified in disregarding all other consciences except

his own. If he has a doubt upon his mind, that doubt should preponderate in favor of the civil government; because God requires him to be a loyal subject. Cases of the kind which justify even his submission to penalty, can hardly occur under a Christian government, because there is a remedy in *law itself*.

We would be slow in endorsing the broad position, "that the action of civil governments within their appropriate jurisdiction is final and conclusive upon the citizen;" for the obvious reason that civil governments even in their jurisdiction over the social relations, *may* require that which the moral law forbids, and forbid that which the moral law requires. If the state requires me to sin against God, I may not sin against him; nor may I sin against him in violating the obligations of the second table of the law, any more than the first table. This is certainly a sound principle of morals; and so far as I am informed, a sound principle of law. So says Hooker in his "Ecclesiastical Polity;" "The public power of all societies, is above every soul contained in the same societies. And the principal use of that power is to give laws unto all that are under it; which laws in such case we must obey; unless there be reason showed which may necessarily enforce, that the law of reason, or God *doth enjoin the contrary.*" Blackstone affirms, that "no

human laws are of any validity if contrary to the laws of God. If any human law should allow, or enjoin us to commit murder, we are bound to transgress that human law." The principle on which we are animadverting would be sound, if civil governments never interfered with the divine law in matters which relate to the social rights and duties of men.

A wicked law is *not law*; it is of the nature of law "to command what is right, and prohibit what is wrong." Whether any particular law be, or be not contrary to the law of God can be *legally* decided only by that department of the government which has a constitutional right to decide this grave question; and while every man's conscience must, in the last resort, reserve this question for its own adjudication, he will rarely act amiss, if he suspects his own conscience rather than the conscience of more able and better men, and the conscience of the law.

The question is a more serious one, whether it is not inconsistent with the instructions which the Bible gives on the subject of civil government, *ever to revolutionize and overthrow the government itself?* Yet to this question, it appears to us, but one answer can be given. The Bible nowhere advocates the doctrine of "passive obedience and non-resistance," to such an extent, as to forbid all hope of relief from a wicked and tyrannical gov-

ernment, or to condemn the efforts of an enlightened and long-oppressed people in rising in their majesty to shake off a tyrannical yoke. The principles to which we have referred, abundantly justify such an effort.

When the Scriptures instruct us, that *civil government is of divine authority*, they do not interdict any such modifications, or changes, or revolutions in the government as the mass of the people may demand. The fact that the Bible *establishes the authority of a government when thus revolutionized*, recognizes the right of revolution. There are rights of the people which are superior to the rights of their rulers, and which, when incorrigibly abused, justify the people in throwing themselves back upon those principles of self-preservation which underlie all human laws, which are written deep and indelibly on the fleshly tables of the human heart, and are inseparably entwined with the bone and sinew of an oppressed and injured community. When the Scriptures teach us, that that *which constitutes the government is the actual and peaceable possession of the civil authority*; they leave the way open for change when the exigency of the times calls for it, and the spirit of complaint and dissatisfaction is so rife among the people, that the government can no longer be endured. When the Scriptures also teach us that civil government is insti-

tuted *for the good of the people*; they implicitly teach us, that where the good of the people is the sport of the government, there is redress somewhere; and if it cannot be found in the government, it must be found in the people themselves. And when the Scriptures teach us, that the authority of civil government *is binding on the conscience*; though they do not suppose that the government is always thus lawfully exercised, yet do they inculcate this duty; and where there is *no such exercise* of it, they leave it to the sound discretion of an aggrieved people to submit to the penalty of the laws, or to effect a change in the government. There is a difference between the legitimate design of government and the abuse of power by wicked men. When a government becomes so corrupt as to lose sight of its legitimate ends; when it becomes a terror to the good and a praise to the bad; when it becomes so degenerate as even to require palpable disobedience to the laws of God; disobedience is not only lawful, but change, revolt, and revolution are lawful, if they are *expedient*. It is simply, in such a crisis, a *question of expediency*, whether the refusal to obey the government shall assume the form of revolution, or submission to penalty.

This, all agree in regarding as a nice and a difficult question. If there is danger to be apprehended from any quarter, it is from a revolution-

ary spirit ; as a general fact, there is no more criminal, or dangerous spirit that ever reigns in the human heart. It is the most desperate spirit, and like hurricane and fire, its consequences are waste and havoc. It is inflamed by success and reckless by despair. There is fearful responsibility in braving the fury of revolution, and the convulsion and overturning of established governments. There may be evils in human governments ; there may be institutions and laws that are unwise and injurious, and such as every friend to God and man may wish to see abolished ; while a rash and furious war upon them may perpetuate the evil, and entail, not only accumulated woes, but accumulated sins. Yet, full of responsibility as this question is, there are conjectures and crises when it must be decided in favor of revolt and revolution. Just as there are instances in which disobedience to parents is a duty, are there instances in which it is a duty to revolt against the civil government. But it must not be forgotten, that as loyalty is the rule, and disloyalty the exception, nothing can be more baneful than an overweening solicitude to *discover the exceptions.*

The circumstances in which revolt is justifiable should be most clear, and the necessity absolute. The oppression must be *grievous and intolerable* ; for nothing less than this would justify an undertaking which must necessarily be fraught with so

many calamities. It must be *general*, because partial oppression oftentimes cannot be avoided in securing the greatest amount of good to the nation. The evil, too, which is complained of, should be *permanent*, or have the prospect of permanency. A single passing cloud will not justify revolt. Men can afford to exercise a little patience, lest in rashly fleeing from the iron weapon, they rush on the bow of steel. There should also exist a *fair and reasonable prospect, a well-founded expectation that the effort will be crowned with success*. Although men of high and noble daring may consent to hazard their own fortunes and lives in resisting tyranny, they have no right to put in jeopardy the fortunes, and well-being, and lives of others ; of their wives and children ; of future generations, or of the welfare of their common country, in an enterprise which, at the best, may be very doubtful. When circumstances offer no hope, or slight hopes of success, it is their duty to suffer patiently and "bide their time." And then, who is to be the judge of this existing condition, and this present emergency ? Individuals ? Most certainly not so. A section, or sections of the common country ? They as little. It is only when the nation, as a man, are impressed with a sense of their wrongs, that these conditions exist ; impressed, not by the instigations of the few, not by the intrigues of ambitious chieftains, but by that deep

and abiding sense of right, that sense of oppression which exists in the popular mind which can no longer be resisted. It is when the nation are animated by one feeling, which intuitively pervades the masses; when, without a word, man knows the one thought of his fellow-man, and vows of fidelity and courage are superfluous and undemanded; then, and not till then, can a people decide, and decide as it were by intuition, that resistance to the powers that be is lawful. Then, and not till then, will they see, with that consciousness of strength and courage, and that confidence in a higher power, which are the surest pledges that their efforts will not be for naught, the sweet promise that through suffering and trial, they will work out a brighter day—a day they themselves indeed may never see, but which will dawn upon their children, and reflect its meridian brightness over unborn millions. It is often said, that *rebellion*, when successful, becomes *revolution*. But though mere success is no proof of the rectitude and goodness of the cause on which it lights; yet here it proves that it was but the consequences of those conjunctures, the result of that spirit, which alone could justify the attempt. Seditious leaders cannot judge of the expediency of resistance to human laws; neither can sectional interests; neither can the few pure patriots who lament the disorders of the times; neither can the

profound jurist and statesman, who prove clear as the light of day, that the government oversteps its lawful authority. It must be the people; the national mind must think; the national heart must beat with one common thought, and hope, and consciousness of right. Then this true arbiter has spoken; “*vox populi, vox Dei.*” Yet would we be slow and cautious in inculcating these truths. It was a weighty remark of Fox, then the first nobleman in the English empire, that “the doctrine of resistance is a principle which we should wish kings never to forget, and their subjects seldom to remember.”

Such are some of the principles of civil government as revealed in the Scriptures. Our second object is, to direct our thoughts TO SOME OF THE MEANS BY WHICH THESE PRINCIPLES ARE BROUGHT INTO DISREPUTE AND LOSE THEIR INFLUENCE.

It is no easy matter to administer civil government wisely. Moses, accomplished statesman as he was, found it difficult to satisfy the nation of Israel, even though the authority under which he acted was of divine appointment, miraculously revealed, and the laws he published received the sanction of heavenly wisdom. Man is naturally prone to a lawless spirit; he is an insubordinate being; nor is it until after long discipline, and until the voice of reason and conscience gains a hearing above the clamors of passion, that he

learns to be cheerfully subject to the laws of God or man. Some of the means by which the doctrines of the Bible on this subject are countervailed, are common to all ages of the world; and some of them have a more special character, and are relevant rather to a particular age. It may perhaps be the best service we can perform to take notice of those, some of which are peculiar to our own times.

One of these is, *the spirit of religious fanaticism*. We are not infidels. The world has seen enough of the baleful influence of irreligious and infidel principles upon the civil government. Never do politicians give greater proof of their own ignorance and weakness, than in giving currency to the principles of infidelity and irreligion. Spread this poison throughout the body politic, and you diffuse an unhinging agency throughout all the social relations, and become the propagators of duplicity, intrigue, and disorganization. If the sinews of human government are ever weakened, it is by the subtle and powerful influence of irreligion and infidelity.

But there is an opposite extreme, which is just as ignorant, if not quite so irreligious. There is a so-called spirit of *reform* which partakes so largely of the radical principles of disorganization, that it is not only a misguided, but a wicked spirit, and is intent on doing right even at the expense of doing

wrong. Political errors, especially when they find a lodgment in the minds of religious men, are near of kin to religious errors, and do immense mischief in the world. *Hooker*, in his "Ecclesiastical Polity," alluding to such religionists, makes the remark, that such men "are not always the best in regard of society; the reason whereof is, that the law of men's actions is one, if they be respected only as men; and another when they are considered as parts of a politic body. There are those whose betters among men would hardly be found, if they did not live amongst men, but in some wilderness by themselves." Those who are resolved, at every hazard, to be controlled by their religious impulses, and who rush to their conclusions with fanatical recklessness, are very apt to be under the guidance of a perverted conscience and will. It is a mawkish sentimentalism, a transcendental benevolence that governs them, and not the sober truths of the Bible. Not a few of them are good men; but they are misguided men, and in their political sphere, unsafe men. Their opinions are more than questionable; nor is the danger small, that they will persist in them, even after they are secretly convinced that they are erroneous. Their very impulsiveness, their combinations, and their infuriate zeal cast a suspicion upon their judgment and their motives. Men, who, like Saul of Tarsus, are "mad" in doing, what they "verily

think," is right, scarcely ever fail to do wrong. When I see those who are so hurried on by conscience as to "breathe out threatenings and slaughter," I cannot suppress the thought that they would do well to sit in severer judgment upon their own motives, and catechize the spirit that governs them somewhat more closely.

There is no small amount of sophistical reasoning on the subject of civil government, and of the duty of its citizens to the laws, and more especially among religious men. The discussions in Parliament, during the Commonwealth under Cromwell, furnish an instructive lesson to Christian statesmen. The error of not a few in our own day lies in reasoning correctly from false principles. They assume that it is the province of human governments to adopt a *perfect system of legislation, and one which tolerates nothing that is wrong*. Yet is there no more unsound principle than this, if it once be employed in human legislation. Who does not see that it transforms the *state* into the *church*, and invests it with inquisitorial power?

The sacred writers were too well instructed to overlook the distinction between moral and civil laws. Moral law lays down rules that are fit for individual conscience; civil law contemplates men as formed into communities, and existing in a social state. Moral law requires absolute

perfection ; it tolerates no evil, either in the heart, or in the life. Civil law must fall far short of this, or defeat its own ends. Moral law makes men responsible to God ; civil law makes them responsible to the state. The civil law of the Jews, prescribed by God himself, tolerated usages that were inconsistent with the moral law, because it is not the province of any civil code to establish a sinless community. If this were the object of civil government, it would need no other system of legislation than the ten commandments. We do not say that human laws may ever *require* men to do wrong ; but it does not follow that they ought to require them to do *all* that is right. Nor does it follow that they ought to forbid all that is wrong ; for it is impossible for them to reach all that is wrong ; human justice can never be so active, vigilant, and cautious. Such laws could never be enforced. In such a system of legislation, the *intention* would be the *corpus delecti*, and this would have to be tried by fallible judges, liable to partiality and corruption, and by means of witnesses perhaps still more liable.

In a civil government, men and times must be taken as they are, and governed by laws as wise and good as a sound policy can execute. Unexecuted laws are the bane of government, and never-failing badge of its weakness. Human governments may legislate too much, as well as too

little. Laws that are wise and good, not only have a good, but an attainable object, and one of sufficient importance to demand their enactment. When human governments attempt to do more than this, they are utopian, and attempt what is impracticable. I can imagine no state of anarchy, or contention worse than that which would be produced by civil laws attempting to enforce *all* that is right, and to prohibit *all* that is wrong. It is fanaticism to dream of such legislation, and not the religion of the Bible. I am afraid of this wild and fanatical spirit, not only because it thus loses sight of the necessity of adapting the institutions of civil government to the character and condition of the people, but because it gives such currency to a lawless state of mind. "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." The step from loyalty to disloyalty crosses an extent of ground beneath which may be a thousand volcanic fires. We say to those who are governed by such a spirit, "If the Lord have stirred thee up against us, let him accept an offering; but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the Lord!"

I speak earnestly on this topic, because the evil on which I am animadverting is a growing evil. They are not the leaders of revolt merely, who have drank deep into this spirit; the cup goes round insidiously among the people. Nor are

they a few visionary theorists in the religious world, nor a few ambitious politicians, that can overturn our institutions. If this fearful catastrophe is ever effected, it will be effected by the people. If the public mind can become so perverted and debauched as to be convinced that it is *under religious obligations* to set the laws of the land at defiance, faction and discord will have triumphed, and triumphed under the badge of sanctity. Yet will we hope for better things. The character of the people is, we trust, under the divine favor, some security against this foul contagion. We are not yet prepared to endorse the notion that the sacred writers are behind the spirit of the age, nor to tread in the footsteps of those who profess to be better than the Bible.

The church of God has, for the most part, hitherto exerted a conservatory influence in this land. It is one of the high commendations of Christianity, that it is no innovator except upon customs and usages which God's word forbids; and it ought to be one of the high encomiums upon Christian men, that they are not *agitators*. There is no state of society, and no form of government to which the Christian religion is not adapted; and if it finds institutions in any community that are unwise and inconsistent with the benevolent spirit it inculcates, it has a more silent and effective method of reform, than furious denunciation, violent

convulsion, and resistance to the laws of the land.

Another of the means by which these salutary principles are in danger of losing their efficacy, is *a perversion of the doctrine of human rights*. It is of evil omen, in a country like this, when the principles which the Bible inculcates in relation to civil government are considered as an attack on the rights and liberties of the people. It is our pride and our happiness, that there are so many uninterrupted links between the administration of national power and its constituents, that so long as the government is protected, the rights of the people are safe. It is not merely by the enactment of wholesome laws, in its legislative capacity, that a nation is free; but in the fact, that the laws are an expression of the mind and will of the nation. Fruitful as our history is in lessons of political wisdom, it offers none more instructive than that whenever the voice of the law is heard it triumphs. There are no civil rights, which such a government does not secure.

True it is, that men have rights—natural, essential, and unalienable rights; but it is also true, that there are rights which they do *not* naturally possess, and which are given them by the laws of their social organization. The rights which they thus obtain from the protection of the laws, are more in number and not less valuable than those

which they enjoy as the inheritance of their common humanity. No man has a right to be governed as he pleases to be governed ; this is no government. There were days when “there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which seemed right in his own eyes.” He was his own governor ; his own will, his passions, his caprice were his law. Is this the true doctrine of human rights ; or does that doctrine involve those rights of the government, and those duties of subordination, which, with even-handed justice, protect alike the government and the governed ? If the subject has his rights, the ruler has his. If the child, the wife, the ward, the slave have their rights, the parent, the husband, the guardian, and the master have theirs. This is God’s arrangement, as the God of nature, the God of providence, and the author of civil government. Where these reciprocal rights and their corellative obligations are understood, and protected from lawless encroachment, there is the government which the Bible recognizes ; and where they are best protected, and best enforced, there is the best exemplification of the doctrine of human rights.

There is nothing more easily perverted than this doctrine ; and nothing that indicates greater obtuseness of conscience, and greater obduracy of heart, than this perversion. The devil perverted it in Paradise. The revolting confederates of Ko-

rah perverted it, when they said to Moses and Aaron, "Ye take too much upon you; seeing all the congregation are holy, wherefore lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?"

This nation stands forth before the world as the intelligent and consistent advocate of the rights of the people; but of what value are these rights where the spirit of liberty is recreant to law? We have no truer conceptions of human liberty than that it is *that state of society where the laws are good, and the laws govern.* A liberty that falls short of this, degenerates into despotism; a liberty that goes beyond it, terminates in wild misrule and lawless licentiousness.

Men may bluster and talk stoutly about liberty and the rights of man, and the galling chains of slavery, who, if they "lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty," would furnish surer pledges that they knew how to value the benign influences and true glory of good government. True liberty is a quiet and noiseless thing; it comes ilke the gentle dew of heaven. Noisy and turbulent men are not her truest friends. The rights of man are in better keeping than in the guardianship of those who, while they profess to be watching them with a vigilant eye, begin a crusade on the government and laws. I have not much confidence in these high-sounding pretensions,

"Their words are softer than oil, yet are they drawn swords." If the rights of man are exposed to danger, it is from that deficiency of public virtue, that want of real patriotism, that *disregard of right*, which expresses itself in disobedience to the laws. Such attacks as these are an assault upon the citadel; and if encouraged, we may "sing a requiem over the tomb of liberty." Men know not the fury of the flame which they are thus kindling; nor how easily it is ignited; nor with what difficulty it is extinguished. When it has burnt the land over, and made it a desert, and they begin to mourn over their own infatuation, they have no authority left them to say, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further." It is the fury of the mind, and not policy, or conscience. "Liberty with order," the liberty of law, this is liberty. I rejoice that there is that in the American bosom which shrinks instinctively from every species of tyranny, and which is not deaf to "the sighing of the prisoner;" but I rejoice, too, that there is some love of right,—some remaining love of order.

Another means by which the principles of good government are depreciated is, *the complaint of the dissatisfied and restive, that the laws themselves are arbitrary and unjust.* After what we have said, it can scarcely be needful for us to affirm, that rulers are responsible to the people; and that it is

the privilege of a free people, with the calmness, impartiality and dignity of men who know how to estimate the blessings of good government, to scrutinize the official conduct of their rulers. To limit, or circumscribe their prerogative of discussing the measures of the government and the equity of its laws, is but preliminary to the vilest bondage. Through all the channels by which the sense of the people may be made to act upon those who hold offices of power and trust, is it their duty to indicate their views, and make their influence distinctly felt. This is one of the checks upon the misapplication of power which they have in their own hand ; while it is at the same time one of the flues by which the pent-up vapors of an excited populace, which might otherwise explode with the force of an earthquake, are let off. Yet is there great caution, and more practical wisdom than most men possess, in asserting this privilege ; because, more especially in seasons of excitement, they so readily throw themselves back upon these primordial elements of their social organization, and are so prompt in remedying one evil, even though it be by the production of a greater.

It may not be forgotten, that those who form, and those who administer the laws, not only have a most arduous work to perform, but a most ungrateful, as well as responsible trust. They have

need of wisdom, self-denial, and firmness, such as do not always fall to the lot of men. It is cause for gratitude to the God of nations, that amid all their local peculiarities and institutions, and rival interests, their laws are so wise. Had there not been great wisdom, experience, and integrity brought to their national counsels, as well as a spirit of mutual concession and compromise which do honor to the heart and head of noble men; many a fair land had been more often plunged in all the horrors of civil war. The kind providence of the Most High has watched over them in the dark hours of their history, and but for this watchful care, our world would have been a field of blood.

The best government in the world may be brought into disrepute, if the people allow their minds to be inflamed by the artful and busy suggestions of its foes. When Absalom was resolved to subvert the throne of David, his artifices, his wealth, and his eloquence were employed in finding fault with the men in power. He knew too well how to produce dissatisfaction in the minds of the people, and to make use of that class of troublesome men, enough of which are found in every community, in order to weaken the public confidence in the government. When the traitor Korah raised the mutiny against Moses and Aaron, he resorted to the same mean artifice of diffusing

a seditious spirit among the people. Multitudes rallied around their standard; and in the true spirit of anarchy, they never relinquished their purpose until the earth opened and swallowed them up. All history shows that, base and detestable as it is, there is a remarkable uniformity in this method of resistance to the powers that be. It is an easy thing for a single turbulent and talented man, who has access to the public mind through the press, or through the pulpit, or through excited assemblies of his fellow-citizens, and in seasons of alarm and apprehension, to impugn the character, the motives, the laws of civil rulers, and to ascribe real, or apprehended calamity to the abuse of power. The object of this clamor is obvious; it is to *disunite the people*, to detach their affections from the government, and prepare the way for those more radical agitations which spread discord and misery. The means does indeed seem inadequate to the end; but experience and observation teach us, that no weight of reason, and no power of worth and character can stop their course.

The friends of good government sometimes count too much on the good sense and intelligence of the people. When a distinguished debater in the British House of Lords, closed a noble speech in favor of an important measure of the government with the words, "My appeal is to the *good*

*sense* of the people ; " the earl of Chesterfield replied, " And I appeal to their *nonsense*." It is not to the *good sense* of the people that demagogues make their appeal. Yet is the good sense of the American people the great hope of honest men. We have never seen the political horizon so dark, but light has broken in from this quarter. The people are sound, and for the most part incorruptible. And while they can never be very long blind to the great political truths we have been contemplating, because they cannot be long deceived in relation to their own interests ; it is no impossible thing that they may open their eyes too late. Though the reign of delusion may be short, it may be long enough for the people, in their phrensy, to withdraw their confidence from wise and able statesmen, to forget their long-tried services, and marshal themselves under some leader of sedition, who has recklessness enough to embark in the storm ; or who has not discernment enough to see the danger ; or who, if he foresee the torrent of blood which may flow, steady to the purpose of his aggrandizement, calculate that his own paltry bark may float upon the deluge and settle upon high places. Thus it is that men sweep away the foundations of public safety and happiness, involve nations in confusion, and fill the world with consternation and distress. And when these threaten us, it is time for all classes of men

to open their eyes upon their danger, and to be wide awake to the signs of the times.

In our concluding observations, we have more to say than time and opportunity would justify us in uttering, were we to give full expression to our views in relation to the present position of our public affairs. If we have the moral virtue to appreciate it, we have the best government in the world. The venerable framers of our federal compact were among the wisest of men, and accomplished as much as human wisdom could accomplish to combine and consolidate the various interests of all classes of men, and the various interests of the several states into one common and national interest. The different branches of the general government are so constituted as to operate as a check and control upon each other in support of the government they are authorized to administer; while the rights of the several states, in the enactment of their own laws, the framing and support of their own institutions, and the general conduct of their own local and domestic interests, are left in their own hands, not only untouched, but to the full extent in which they do not interfere with the stipulations of the common confederacy, fortified by this confederacy, and by law entitled to the countenance and support of the united powers of the land.

Thus far in our history, the principles of this confederation have proved effective, not only in the preservation of individual liberty, state rights, and the authority of the general government, but in the unrivalled prosperity of the people. We are under better advantages than any other people have been, to appreciate the excellence of a republican government, when wisely and faithfully administered. We can testify by experience, to its mild and beneficent influence; to the occupation it affords, and the habits of industry it encourages; to the excitement of intellect it calls for, and the development of genius and talent it promotes; to its elevation of spirit, its high-minded valor, and its augmenting resources; and though last, not least, to the religious freedom and privileges it secures. We have seen days of trial, and have survived them; stormy conflict, and have breasted the storm. Struggles there have been between the different branches of the government itself; struggles between some of the states, and between the state governments and the general government. There have also been dissensions among the people, and local complaints because local interests were disregarded; while these complaints and struggles have served to draw still more closely the bonds of our union, and exemplify the conservative power of the constitution under which we have so eminently prospered.

Yet have we reached a crisis of deep interest in the history of these states. The time has come which the friends of law and order have often predicted, in which all other distinctions ought to be lost sight of, and the people of this land arrange themselves as the friends, or the enemies of good government, in accordance with their honest purpose to support, or not to support the constitution. This is now the great test of every man's political principles.

Those who administer the government have been called to their places of trust by the voice of the people. Whatever department they occupy, they are those in whom the majority of the nation is united, and to whom the nation has pledged its support. They have been called to this responsibility under circumstances which have put to the test both their moral and political integrity. And it has been a cheering spectacle, to see men venerable for age, talent, and character; men separated by rivers and mountains; men long distinguished by strong differences of political opinion, and accustomed to the arena of political chivalry; simultaneously and promptly throwing down their gloves before the common enemy, and putting their lances at rest in defence of the commonwealth. Never since the eventful day on which our independence of the mother country was declared, has it been more

obvious than during the struggle of the year 1850, that sound wisdom and discretion, and sweet and heavenly charity, that guardian angel of our union, was hovering, though sometimes with fluttering wings, over our honored capitol. Those there were who would fain have sundered the bonds which hold together these confederated states, even at the sacrifice of that charter of our hopes which they had sworn to maintain ; and those there were, the true representatives of the nation, who remembered the struggle and the compact of our fathers, and who, filled with apprehension for the still more bitter struggles of their children, proved themselves true to their oaths, true to the constitution, and true to the country. And God prospered the right.

It often happens, that in the administration of human governments, a choice of evils is all that is left to human wisdom. Of the statute of the last Congress, in regard to *fugitive slaves*, perhaps it does not become me to speak. It is the proper business of those "learned in the law," to interpret its provisions, and decide on the question of its constitutionality. While I am free to confess that it is a law capable of great abuse in the hands of a partial and corrupt court, and what law in such hands is not capable of abuse, with the light I have, I do not perceive that it transcends the constitutional powers of the national legislature, nor

am I now prepared to impugn its rectitude, or its wisdom, or to unite with those who defame its authors. Of this one thing I am convinced, that in the circumstances in which the providence of God placed them—with the constitution on the one hand, sanctioning and protecting the rights of the slaveholding states, and the reasonable demand of those states, that these rights should be protected; and on the other hand, the preservation of our union as a federal government, and the accession of new states, free from the evils of domestic slavery—they did as their fathers had done, the best that was left to human wisdom to accomplish; the best they could for the master and the slave, for the north and the south, for the country and for the world.

The morality of this law is supposed to depend upon the question, *whether slavery is itself a sin*. The subject does not thus present itself to my own mind. Let it be assumed, for the sake of the argument, that in every form and degree, slavery *is* a sin against God. Human laws allow of sin; they must allow it, or adopt a system of perfect legislation, and one that requires *all* that is right and forbids *all* that is wrong. But this is not the object, nor the proper business of human laws; this is the high prerogative of the divine law and the divine law alone; and the most that human laws can do, after having adopted those rules of conduct

which a sound policy suggests, is to turn the transgressors of the divine law over to their responsibility to the Supreme Lawgiver. Why the sin of slavery should embarrass human legislation more than other sins, remains to be shown. What if there are states in this union which are allowed by law to open the theatre on the Lord's-day; or which legalize gambling, or incest, or polygamy; has the general government any official and authoritative concern in this matter? Such laws are sin; but it does not belong to the general government to apply the remedy; it is an affair of their own; it lies between them and the great Lawgiver, nor will he hold them guiltless.

But ought we not in all fairness to look at the other part of the alternative? Is it so clear a truth that slavery *is a sin*? That it is a great *political evil*, few deny; that the relation between the master and the slave may be, and often is so abused, as to stamp the master's conduct with sin and infamy, will not be called in question. But this does not prove that this relation, apart from all abuses, and oppression, and unkindness, is sinful. There was no sin in Abraham's being a slaveholder; for if there had been, God would not have directed him to put the seal of his covenant upon his slaves, and train them up in his fear. There was no sin in the Jews being slaveholders; else

would the moral law never have legislated on the subject of slavery.

It is not a little surprising to see, how the men “of one idea” will allow themselves to be carried away by their idol thought. It does not require much to make that man an infidel, who permits his confidence in the sacred Scriptures to be shaken by the fact that they nowhere condemn slavery as sinful. That they do not so regard it every fair mind must concede. There is no getting away from this fact,\* if there were nothing that decides

\* The Hebrew word which the Septuagint translates *δολος*, and the Greek *δολος* as used in the New Testament, most certainly mean *slave*. Schleusner says it denotes *homo non liber, nec sui juris*. In Matthew viii. 9, xiii. 27 and 28, in 1 Cor. vii. 21 and 22, and xii. 13, it is used in opposition to the word *free*. For the classical use of it in this sense, see *Schleusner's Lexicon*.

*Bretschneider* gives the same view. It is, says he, *servus, qui sui juris non est, cui opponitur δ ελευθηρος*. It is *homo vilis conditionis—homo vilis—homo libertate voluntatis privatus—subjectus, ad obedientiam obstrictus*.

*Donnigan*, who, according to Hallam in his History of the Literature of Europe, appears to have taken more pains, and to have enjoyed greater facilities in the preparation of his Lexicon, than most lexicographers, translates the word by our English word *slave—slave as opposed to master*. The Greek word which signifies to *reduce to slavery*; also the word which denotes *slavery, the condition of a slave*; also the word which denotes a *little slave*; also the word which denotes *servitude*, are all derived from the substantive *δολος*.

It is worthy of remark also, that when the Scriptures speak of servants who are not *slaves*, they designate them as *hired servants—μισθωτοι—mercenarii*. See Septuagint, Exod. xii. 45; Lev. xxii. 10 and 25, vi. 40, 50 and 53; Deut. xv. 8, and xxiv. 14. *Rosenmüller* defines this class of servants as those *qui in domo Israelitae pro mercede servunt*. The words which denote voluntary service of different kinds are altogether different *δολος*; the *λαρηνς* and the *σικετηνς* were not always slaves.

*Stephens*, in his *Thesaurus*, puts the meaning of these words beyond doubt. See these different words in locis. If Stephens be good authority, *δολος* is

it besides Paul's Epistle to Philemon. Onesimus was a fugitive slave, who ran away from Colosse to Rome, at that time the capital of the world, and the resort for refugees from almost all lands. Here he became a converted man under the preaching of Paul. He had been an unprofitable servant, but was now profitable to Paul, and would be equally profitable to his master. Paul might have retained him, had he not been mindful that he was bound to "render every man his due." Onesimus was still a slave, though he had become a Christian man. He was bound by that great law of Christianity, "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the foward;" with "good-will doing service, knowing that whatsoever good thing a man doeth, the same shall receive of the Lord, *whether bond or free.*" This Apostle was very far from teaching the doctrine that Christianity was inconsistent with slavery; and that from the hour in which a man becomes a Christian, his mission is to revolutionize the established principles of social order, and break down the distinctions between the master and the slave. He therefore required Onesimus to return to his master,

*servus*—the correlative of *δεθποτης*, and the opposite of *ελευθερος*. Xenophon, Homer, Plutarch, Lucian, and other classical writers referred to, define it quasi *vinctus vel vincta habens*. Notwithstanding the bold assertions of a late writer in the New Englander, no scholar will deny that the Greek word *δελης* signifies a *slave*.

ter, and by repairing the evils of his former negligence, to conduct himself as a faithful servant. And Onesimus did so. He put into practice the precept, "Let every man *abide* in the same calling in which he was called. Art thou called being a servant? care not for it; for he that is called in the Lord, being a *slave*, is the Lord's *freeman*."

Paul had a tender regard for this fugitive; he loved him as one of the favored few whom he had begotten in his bonds. He calls him *his son*; and on his part Onesimus appears to be no less attached to Paul as his spiritual father. Paul no doubt would like to have retained him near his own person, that he might have ministered to his wants during his tedious captivity, and stood by him at the end of his course. Indeed, he says as much, when he writes, "Whom I would have retained with me, that he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel." But he saw that this would have been wrong. His circumstances were peculiar, and he determined to set an example to the church at Colosse, and to the church to the end of the world, what was the duty of a Christian man under such circumstances. What if he had retained him? What conclusions would have been drawn from this fact at the present day? And what conclusions ought we to draw from it, now we know that he did not retain him? Let not this lesson be lost upon us. Let

this Epistle to Philemon be *read*, and let those who read it tell us why it forms a part of the sacred volume. It inculcates no Christian doctrine; it has no object but to enforce the lesson that Christianity is nicely delicate in refraining from all interference in the rights of others. It seems to us, that one reason why God converted Onesimus was, that he might be thus sent back to his master a reformed man, and thus hand down the truth that Christianity, however much it may meliorate the condition of the slave, does not interfere with, but distinctly recognizes the rights of the master. It is perfectly obvious that Onesimus was the slave of Philemon.\*

\* I am happy to confirm these views of the apostle Paul on the subject of slavery by a reference to the views of the late Dr. Buckminster, of Boston, who was one of the most accomplished scholars of his age. "What ideas," says this elegant writer, "would the reader of this letter to Philemon form of the nature and spirit of Christianity? I think, that even from this short epistle, he would learn to reverence and love the cause which could form such men and dictate such sentiments. Here he would see the distinctions of *master* and *slave*, of the chief apostle and his meanest convert, vanishing in their common relation to Jesus and his gospel. Yet in *remarkable coincidence* with the doctrine of the apostle in other epistles, he would find that Christianity *made no alterations in the civil or political relations of the converts*, for Paul demands, not the emancipation of the *slave*, but on the contrary, returns him to the service of his master."—Buckminster's Sermons.

Our Methodist friends may also learn something on this subject from their deservedly esteemed champion, *Dr. Adam Clarke*. In his commentary upon the Epistle to Philemon, he says, "The Christian religion *never cancels* any civil relations. A *slave*, on being converted, and becoming a freeman of Christ, has *no right* to claim on that ground *emancipation* from the service of his master. JUSTICE therefore required St. Paul to send

So general was slavery in Greece, that in the famous war of Platea there were but 5,000 Spartans and 35,000 slaves; while in the Spartan fleet, they composed the mass of the sailors. In Sparta there were 500,000 slaves to 150,000 free-men. At the time Paul wrote this epistle, Colosse was under the proconsulship of Rome. Slaves under the Roman empire were the most abject of slaves. Single masters in the Roman senate had as many as 10,000, and some as many as 20,000.

Paulus Emilius sold 150,000 prisoners of war as slaves, and Julius Cæsar half a million. According to Mr. Gibbon, they comprised one half of the empire, and could not have been less than

back Onesimus to his master ; and CONSCIENCE obliged Onesimus to agree in the propriety of the measure." The 16th verse of this epistle, says he, "refers to the *right* which Philemon had in Onesimus ; he was a part of his *property*, and of his family, as a *slave*." Again he says, "No servant should be *taken*, or retained from his own master, without his master's consent." The learned commentator's counsel to his Methodist brethren in New York, at the close of the whole is, "Reader, go thou and do likewise."

Dr. McKnight, in his literal translation and notes upon this epistle says, "Onesimus was Philemon's *slave*. It belonged to Philemon to dispose of his *own slave* in the way he thought proper. Such was the apostle's regard to *justice* and to the *rights of mankind*. Christianity makes no alteration in men's political state. Onesimus the slave did not become a free-man by embracing Christianity, but was still *obliged* to be *Philemon's slave forever*, unless his master gave him his freedom.

Dr. Scott, in his commentary on this epistle, also speaks of Onesimus as "the *slave* of Philemon," and his "*legal property*."

Rosenmüller, in his "Scholia in Epistolam ad Philemonem" says, "Onesimus certe *servus* Philemonis fuit a *domino suo profugus*." Remarking upon the 15th verse he says, "Ut eum retineas *perpetuo servum bonum, tibique utiliem*."

sixty millions. As a body of men they were considered dangerous to the state, and therefore their bondage was severe. They were the most unfortunate class of human beings, excluded from every privilege of society, and from almost every blessing of life. They were entirely at the disposal of their masters; torture them, maim them, or put them to death they might, and be amenable to no human laws. It is true that the changes which subsequently took place in the moral and political condition of the empire greatly meliorated the condition of the slave; and we find them employed in honorable occupations, and well cared for. But it was not until the time of the emperor Adrian that masters were deprived of the power they possessed over their slaves in the days of the Republic and the Cæsars. This was long after Paul's letter was addressed to Philemon.

Here, then, in view of the character of Roman and Grecian slavery, we have a fact of some consequence to our own times. No less a man than the apostle Paul, writing to a Christian minister in Phrygia, at a period of the Roman empire when slavery existed in its most exceptionable forms, *sends back this fugitive slave*. He does not secrete him; he does not tell him to resist the public authorities; he does not "help him" to escape his bondage; he *sends him back*. Modern abolitionists would have branded Paul as a "slave-

catcher." But there his character stands in its high and unsullied integrity and loveliness; not as the advocate and friend of Roman slavery, but as the friend of law and good government. He was far from attempting to revolutionize the established principles of social order. If there were evils in the Roman empire, the way in which he desired to remedy them was by preaching the gospel; by diffusing its spirit of love and gentleness, and leaving it to work the cure of evils, by the gradual melioration of them, which he knew it could not suddenly remove. And, therefore, he says not a word on the subject of slavery; utters not a hint of rebuke to Philemon for being a slaveholder; not one intimation about giving Onesimus his freedom; but simply a request that he would receive and treat him as a Christian man ought to treat a Christian slave. Would that Paul's mantle had fallen on all the ministers of the gospel, and that the example of this great Apostle might speak in these ends of the earth! Slavery, what is it? What has it been? what is it now? What is the slavery of the South compared with the tenfold more extensive and more absolute servitude of the myriads of the Russian despot? What is it, in mental, and moral, and physical degradation compared with the condition of operatives in the manufactories, and more especially in the coal mines of England? Let the British

quarterlies answer these inquiries. The word *slavery* is not the evil; it is the *amount of sin and suffering* that it so often occasions which we deplore. And if this be the evil, the most judicious writers on the other side of the water instruct us, that the working classes of Great Britain "have as great an amount of toil, and as few bodily comforts to remunerate them as the slaves of ancient Egypt or Rome."\*. *Cruelty* is always sinful; *slavery* not always. I do not see how any Christian can affirm that slavery under Christian influences is sinful. I have no desire to be a slaveholder; but if I were such a slaveholder as Job, Abraham, and Philemon, my conscience would not condemn me. If all masters were like these, where would be the sin of slavery?

There is great want of consideration on this subject in the minds of some who are otherwise wise and sober men. If slavery were a sin *per se*, we should never find, in the New Testament, so many counsels to masters and slaves in regard to their mutual obligations. A northern abolitionist could not go into the Southern states and address a promiscuous assembly of masters and slaves in such language as the following:—"Let as many slaves as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and

\* McCosh on the Divine Government.

his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather *do them service*, because they are faithful." Yet the direction of the Bible is to all the ministers of the gospel in such circumstances, "*These things teach and exhort.*" And what if some abolitionist preacher had protested against this Christian doctrine;—and what if he had declared that slavery is a sin, and that he never could "teach and exhort such things?" Let us listen to what the next sentence addresses to such a man. "*If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, and perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds.*" Could the Apostle have furnished a more graphic description of modern abolitionists, than in these few words? Are not such instructions a marvel, if slavery is necessarily a sin? And what shall we say of the fugitive slave law, if such instructions as these are binding?

Very different views I know are taken of this subject. A religious paper in our own city, not only adopts, but justifies itself in adopting the following language:—"To the fugitives themselves . . . this law is no law . . . and to resist it even

unto death, is their right, and it may be their duty . . . . To each *individual* fugitive, to every man or woman, who, having escaped from bondage and tasted liberty, is in hourly peril of being seized and dragged back to slavery, we say,—Be fully prepared for your own defence. If to you death seems better than slavery, then refuse not to die—whether on the wayside, at your own threshold, or even as a felon upon the gallows. Defend your liberty and the liberty of your wife and children, as you would defend your life and theirs against the assassin. If you die thus, you die nobly, and your blood shall be the redemption of your race. Should you destroy the life of your assailant, you will pass into the custody of the criminal law . . . under an indictment for murder; but the verdict of the community, and the verdict of almost any jury will be, justifiable homicide in self-defence . . . . Or should a different verdict be found, and you be condemned to die as a murderer, your ignominious death shall be luminous with the halo of a martyr, and your sacrifice shall be for the deliverance of your people.”

It would seem that the laws of the land are literally to be *resisted vi et armis*. And what is worse, such teaching, if we have been rightly informed, comes from the lips of ministers of the gospel. We can scarcely believe our eyes when we read such things; and when we read them, we

confess we feel somewhat as Moses felt when he *fell upon his face* before God's throne. Has it come to this, that any of Christ's ministers are preaching the seditious doctrine of open resistance to the laws of the land, and *resistance unto blood!* Is it so, that the fugitive slave is *religiously* incited by the ambassadors of peace, *to kill and slay*, rather than submit to the laws of the land? Is this the religion of the Bible? Is this the teaching of Christ and his apostles? Is this the Christianity of *the North*; and shall our Southern friends read such things and say, *this is just what we are to look for from Northern Christians?* If so, it is no marvel they advocate a disunion of the states. Who would bind his destiny with communities whose religious papers are the hot-beds of bloody revolt? It is well for this piratical navigator, that he does not show his colors, and that if he has ecclesiastical relations, he is careful to conceal them. "Stat nominis umbra." It sometimes happens, that those who make light of their obligations to the Supreme Lawgiver, think more seriously of their responsibilities to their fellow-men.

For myself, I fear for the state of my country, and look to the God of my fathers for protection from this religious frenzy, and for the wisdom that is profitable to direct us. My countrymen, where are we? In what land do we live? By what

sort of men are we surrounded? What genius of wickedness is this, which thus utters its bloody counsels from God's altars? We look upon such teaching as subversive of all religious, moral, and social obligations. And our own single voice is but the utterance of millions, when we say that there is yet piety enough at the North, and wisdom, and patriotism, and fidelity to our social compact, to disavow such wicked and mischievous counsels.

In the memorable struggle for our national independence, it is well known that we were not, at first, a united people. There was slavery in the North, as well as in the South; but it was the policy of the North to eradicate their entire system of domestic servitude. In that event, the slave-holding states of the South would be exposed to unfriendly influences from the free states; and before the South would consent to unite heart and hand in organizing and establishing the government we now enjoy, they demanded of the North some *honest pledge* that their rights, as slave-holding states, should be protected by the proposed constitution. The North *had been the great slave-trading community*, and had filled the Southern market with slaves; they felt the force of the appeal from their Southern brethren; and justice to the South constrained them to consent to that constitutional protection of the slave-holding states,

which lies at the basis of that subsequent legislation which now agitates the land. The compact was a *bona fide* compact; and without it, the independence of these United States is a fact that never would have been recorded in American history.

I demand then, in the name of common honesty, if we are not religiously bound by this compact? When our fathers pledged their fortunes, their lives and their sacred honor to support this constitution, *they did well*; in the sight of God, *they did just as they ought to have done*; and we do well to maintain the inheritance intact and unsullied. If I understand the teachings of the Bible, it enjoins upon all men the duty of being faithful to their engagements. It places “covenant breakers” in the same category with the boldest transgressors and the most mischievous of men. I shall be greatly disappointed in my views of the North, if the result does not bear me out in saying, on behalf of the great mass of Northern men, we are no truce-breakers. We are honest men, and the friends of good order. We are friends of the South, and make no war upon their domestic institutions. Whatever reasons we may have had for abolishing slavery among ourselves, their domestic institutions are not our business. We are not responsible for them, even if they are wrong; any more than we are responsible for other sins

over which their own laws have the exclusive control. And if they are right, what have we to do, in interfering with them? There are unreasonable and misguided men among us; but the South does us great injustice, if it allows itself to believe that these men are the true indices of the Northern character. We do not disturb the rights of the South. To the free colored man we open our doors and our charities; but we would have it understood, that the North is not the place for fugitive slaves. Some of them are no doubt good citizens; but, *prima facie*, they are bad. They are a trouble to us; they corrupt our population, overload our prisons, are a nuisance to our almshouses, and had better be at home where they are better employed and better governed. Nor is it among the least of the benefits of the "Fugitive Slave Law," that they are so rapidly disappearing from the midst of us. Most sincerely do we say to the South, keep your slaves at home; and forget not that there is One Being in the universe to whom you are responsible, and that you also have a Master in heaven.

We believe these to be the general, though not the unanimous, views of the North. That there should be a difference of opinion on the subject of slavery, does not surprise us; but that there should be men in the midst of us who adopt extensive measures to resist the government, throw

the land into confusion, and separate what God has joined together by a common descent, a common language, common interests, common laws, a common honor, common intermarriages, a common system of Christian benevolence, common churches, common rivers and railroads, a solemn compact, sealed by the blood of our fathers, ratified by ourselves, smiled upon by the God of providence, and envied by the nations; cannot be accounted for except by the most unaccountable delusion. One of "the seven things which the Lord hateth," is he that "soweth discord among brethren." We deplore such divisive measures. If we are resolved to have no alliance with States where slavery is countenanced by one of the most sacred of earthly compacts; to show them no favor, and give their legitimate claims no quarter; if we mean to introduce the iron-bed of Procrustes, and make our own opinions, whether long or short, the rigid measure of theirs, then farewell to peace; "instruments of cruelty are in our habitations."

Men talk about the division of the States; but *how* is this division to be effected? Have we at the North forgotten, that, on the question of slavery, the advantage lies with the South; that the Constitution recognizes the right of the master to the service of his slave; and that we ourselves are bound by this Constitution, so long as we form an integral part of the Union? Let this point be

once settled, and we ourselves have no alternative but to abide by the Constitution, or secede from these confederated States. Why should the South secede? They utter no complaints against the Constitution; and only ask that its stipulations be faithfully observed. Are the North prepared to assume the responsibility of seceding? A few may be prepared for it; misguided and misguiding men—men who are prepared for anything; but is the North prepared for this? Millions of voices respond, God forbid that any such reckless and unhallowed hands should invade the sanctuary of our sacred Union! Never! No, never, till our fathers' God abandons to national suicide! Every feeling of humanity echoes the response; the echo is reverberated by our solemn oaths; nor dare we appeal to a higher law, with this oath upon our lips. *Conscience* affords no refuge from this dilemma.

Besides, has the nation no conscience? and is not the law of the land an expression of the conscience of the nation? I would not *resist* the fugitive slave law, even if it scandalized my conscience. Much less should I be excused in stimulating others to resistance, unless my single conscience is more enlightened than the conscience of the wisest and the best. I may feel that I am right; yet other men have a conscience as well as myself. In matters of high national interest and safety,

my own conscience may not be clamorous in the presence of the higher conscience of the law and the nation. For myself, I would quit the land I love so well, as my fathers did theirs, rather than dwell where I could not conscientiously obey its laws, or be the instigator of rebellion. And when this unbending conscience of mine has sought a refuge in other lands, and finds that, go where it will, there are evils in civil government which it must wink at; it may, perhaps, seek out a land where there is no law, and where every man's conscience is a law to himself. And if I shrink from this, then let me remain an obedient subject in a land where, by the testimony of my own conscience, the laws are wiser and more equitable than in any other country on the globe. What sane man would wish to live under a government in which the dictates of each man's conscience formed each man's law? There may be instances in which the conscience of the one or the few might be safely trusted; but if we look for this one or these few, shall we find them among those, who, upon the rights of private judgment and conscience, build the right of revolt and resistance to authority?

Conscience *has* its claims on the subject of slavery. It instructs us that we should be kind to the slave. We owe a debt of justice to injured Africa and her sons. We ought to meliorate

their condition by every expedient of Christian love and wisdom. And this every Christian slaveholder does; nor are we always sensible to what an extent the slaves are thus cared for. My own conscience is pressed with the question, what can be ultimately done with the slaves of the South; but for myself, I have no such conscience as would permit me to give them their freedom. I have no hesitation in saying that it would be *a sin* at once to set them at liberty; they would be friendless and homeless, and wander as vagabonds in the earth. There is not so miserable a population in the land, as the fugitive slaves, supported by charity and exposed to crime. Could I liberate all the slaves in these states by a prayer, I could not offer that prayer in love to the slave. The way is not yet prepared for so wild a project as the immediate abolition of slavery. The British government made the experiment, and perhaps they did well to make it. But by its exacting apprenticeship it has been ruinous to the slave; and were the question now to be decided by the British parliament, in the opinion of the best judges in England and Scotland, the result would be very different from what it was before experience taught them that a sickly sympathy and an ill-judged philanthropy sometimes miss their aims.

Southern slaveholders have consciences as well

as other men; and they ask us, to tell them **WHAT TO DO WITH THEIR SLAVES?** They are in earnest in this inquiry, and their language is, before you declaim so unqualifiedly against slave-holding as a sin, **TELL US WHAT TO DO WITH OUR SLAVES.** Are you not bound to tell them, or "ever after to hold your peace?" If you say, *emancipate them*; thousands are willing to do this; but greater thousands who control their laws forbid their emancipation. If you say, *emancipate them in defiance of the laws*; the consequence is, that they become the property of the law, and are sold to the highest bidder. If you say, *send them to the free states*, the free states will not receive them. Indiana will not. Ohio will not. When a colony of them, freed by their masters, was not long since sent to anti-slavery Ohio, that high-minded state would not give them a place for the soles of their feet. Yet these very people, in Congress and out of Congress, are all the while intent on the infuriate cry of *emancipation*. Is it to be wondered at, that such things as these are, to the last degree, galling to the South?

There is this one fact, on this subject, that may not be overlooked. The slave-holding states are unhappily *placed in such a condition, that the slaves must be either slaves or masters*: and that what under other circumstances seems to many persons unkind, falls within the bounds of self-

preservation. This burden is laid upon the South, laid upon them in our early history, not by their own fault only, but by the cupidity of Northern slave-traders. Instead of being goaded to phrensy, as they are by Northern abolitionists, they have demands upon our sympathy.

There are men among us who are deliberately prepared to dissolve the union, rather than submit to the fugitive slave law ; this doctrine they publicly avow and defend. But I entreat them to consider, *if this would be kindness to the slave*. Will the slaves become *freemen* by such a measure as this, or will they, by such a course, find one link of their bondage broken ? What if such a disunion cannot be effected without a civil war, which is certainly no unreasonable supposition ? Can an enlightened conscience be satisfied with this crusade against the union, if it should thus prove a crusade *in favor* of slavery ? Again, I demand, what does the slave gain by it ? What does conscience gain, what does a benevolent spirit toward the slave gain, by turning this land into a battle-field ? Is this sympathy with the slave, or is this washing our hands of the sin of slavery ? Where will the poor slaves be, when this work of death is accomplished ? Nay, fear comes upon me, when I ask, what will they be about, while these instruments of death are preparing, and this work of death is going on ? Abolitionists know

well what they will be about, because they foresee and have predicted it. *They will just be cutting the throats of their masters.* Is this wise? Is conscience satisfied with this? We know it is sufficiently cruel to the master; but is it kind to the slave? After all the wrongs you have inflicted upon him, can you counsel him to become thus a wholesale murderer, and go to the judgment, and sink to perdition thus stained with blood?

If this is the dark side of the picture, look then at the fairer side. Suppose you are able to effect a *peaceable* disunion of the states, and consent to establish a distinct southern confederacy. Do you help the slave by this; or do you most effectively rivet his bondage, and perpetuate his chains? If by allowing such a confederacy, you could secure the abolition of slavery, so far as slavery is concerned, you would be the gainers by such disunion. This you do not expect thus to accomplish. You gain nothing by it; you even shut the door against those kind influences by which slavery has been so rapidly melting away in the Northern States.

Nay farther, if when these states are once divided, there should exist any international intercourse between them, do you not perceive that no treaty could be formed between these distinct confederations, except one which rests upon your acknowledgment of slave-holding rights, your engagement to protect them, and your obligation

to some fugitive slave law, which would place you certainly in no better condition than you now are? There is no possible view, in which the slave population would be the gainers by a severance of the union. It is no easy matter for us to divine what it is that abolitionism is seeking after. Are its advocates governed by the law of love, and doing as they would be done by? To us it seems that it is high time for this mad spirit to take counsel of conscience. It would have a melancholy triumph in the severance of the union. It will have done its work then; and what it has been doing for a series of years—unwittingly have made the land of freedom the permanent house of bondage.

But it is not the bright side of the picture, that we are allowed to look at. Separate these states, peaceably, or not peaceably; and you draw an air line steeped in blood. You establish a thousand cities of refuge for the fugitive slave at the North, by which you augment the vigilance of his owners and his own bondage, and you commence a border warfare, where mutual hatred and recriminating, retaliating vengeance will perform their accursed work. Nay more; you lay open the different sections of the land to those foreign alliances which will embroil other nations, and invite the English lion and the Russian eagle to their prey.

There is one thought more which I may not suppress. "Charity seeketh not her own." Christian love values the whole more than a part. The slave population of this land has cost us dear already. It has cost us time and money that ought to have been better employed; it has cost us divided counsels, mutual love and confidence, embittered feelings, and unsleeping jealousy. It may cost us the peace and prosperity of the fairest land on which the sun shines. In the name of that charity which "worketh no ill to his neighbor," I ask, has it not cost us enough? Shall we sacrifice the harmony, the good faith, the honor of these states for the fugitive slave? To me it seems, this is asking too much. Our fathers lavished their blood and treasure to very little purpose, if the prosperity of these states is to be thus disturbed. I have yet to learn from the Bible that I must become a rebel against the government which protects me, and array myself with the enemies of my country, in order to protect a fugitive slave. So long as it is the law of the land, I will stand by the "Fugitive Slave Law." I am willing to meet the issue even in the strongest case, and one which none but a blinded conscience and a sophistical reasoner would present, and say, I love my country, and love her laws more than I love the fugitive slave. He may have been unrighteously brought to our shores;

but I am not responsible for that unrighteousness. He may be a sufferer; but I am not under obligations to relieve the suffering, if by so doing I produce a greater amount of suffering. For the crushed and deserted African, I would do and suffer much, if thereby I could make him better and more happy. But it is a deplorable fact, that the African race has for ages presented the most discouraging field for the efforts of the Christian church. True religion has never flourished among them, and they remain to this day almost entire strangers to Christianity. We have no doubt, that under the reign of Jesus Christ, they will be elevated to the true worship of God; nor can we suppress the hope, that the early curse pronounced upon them will be alleviated. But we cannot forget that there is a *judicial barrier* between them and the two other races. We are far from asserting that there is any inferiority of nature, or original deficiency of intellect in the posterity of Ham. There is no evidence of this. Had we ourselves, for three thousand years, been "the common spoil of the world," and subjected to their degradation, I much doubt if we should have risen higher in intellect than they. We cheerfully give them this intellectual equality; but we cannot rescue them from the ancient curse. We have given them the gospel; nor have we any doubt that a brighter day will arise upon them. "Ethi-

opia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God ;" but she shall be Ethiopia still. If I read the curse denounced against her rightly, and as all the commentators to whom I have had access read it, even in the millennium she will be the subordinate and serving race.\* While, therefore, God's purposes

\* See all the Commentaries. I quote two passages from Adam Clark. Gen. ix. 25. "God had wise and powerful reasons to induce him to sentence the descendants of Ham to *perpetual servitude*." Josh. ix. 23. "Did not the curse of Ham imply *slavery* and nothing else ? Does it not sufficiently appear that nothing else than *perpetual slavery* is implied in the curse of the Gibeonites ? Those of the Canaanitish race who would not renounce their idolatry were to be extirpated ; those who did were to be preserved alive, on condition of their becoming tributary and serving as slaves."

This view of the curse upon Canaan has been questioned, I believe, by none but infidels. Did God, it has been asked, employ this "drunken sinner," just awakened from his wine, to utter the language of *prophecy*? To this scurrilous demand, I answer, God has employed wicked men to utter truths and predictions that have been fulfilled ; he so employed Balak. But I reply again, Noah was no "drunken sinner." See the commentators on the passage which speaks of his conduct. Listen to God's testimony also, "And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark ; *for thee I have seen righteous before me in this generation.*" The Apostle Paul speaks of him in the following language :—" By *faith* Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house ; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is of *faith*."

The author has made this reference to the curse upon Ham, because it is *God's truth* ; the truth of that God who is himself the great and essential charity. That he is not mistaken in his views, he is led to believe from the perfect conformity of all the commentators to which he has access, in the views he has expressed. Henry, Scott, Clark, Patrick, Poole in his Synopsis, and Rosemüller ali give the same view of the passage. And is not the interpretation abundantly verified by historical facts ? Men who, merely from their sympathy with the colored race, cast contempt upon this prediction, must be driven to infidelity. In the relations of this

are not the rule of human conduct, and no excuse for human wickedness, we may not be heedless observers of his providence, nor rashly enter into a controversy with him at the peril of the descendants of Shem and Japheth. We may contend for the Ethiopian race, and contend for them till the land is covered with gore and dismembered ; but there the record will stand, "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant."

I have done. I may, perhaps, be criminated for this interference with a subject which seems to fall more directly within the province of the legislator and the statesman. Be it so. For humanity's sake and for truth's sake, I have spoken. Happy for the country, had there been no call for us to travel out of our appropriate sphere. While the men *in* England and the men *from* Scotland, who are always harping on the subject of American slavery, are playing a game in this country sufficiently obvious to reflecting men ; and while they are encouraged in their seditious spirit by so many of the unreflecting among ourselves, we may

general truth to the question of American slavery, a bold writer in one of our public papers, says, " If this be Christianity, is it not a virtue to reject it ? If these are the authentic expounders of the will and word of Christ, let us turn to Mohammed and the Gentiles. If it be the work of God to keep our brethren in chains, knowing no motive but the lash, no hope but death or escape, and then to replunge them into the hell they have fled from to us—then let us *diligently know and endeavor to do the WILL OF THE DEVIL.*"

not keep silence. I have lived long enough to see, that, on the great subject of republican liberty, the United States are at issue with the world; and that if, on this question of slavery, they can triumph over us as a divided people, they will have given the finishing stroke to civil and religious freedom. The crisis has come. The eyes of the world are upon us. If completed at all, the tragedy will be completed soon. These are not groundless fears. There is a deep current setting the wrong way; and men are not wanting who know well how to avail themselves of it, both for ecclesiastical and political ends. Our most important interests are at stake; and if we are undone, we shall deserve our chains. Our only hope is in Him, whose province it is to frustrate the destructive counsels of men, to change, or defeat their purposes, and not suffer any weapon formed against us to prosper.

## CONCLUSION.

It has been the main object throughout the preceding chapters, not simply to address the understanding, but to present such a view of truth as should be adapted to influence the conscience, the heart, and the deportment. How far this object has been attained, and with what intentions it has been pursued, will become the subject of a solemn scrutiny when both the writer and the reader shall appear before the Son of Man. In all these lessons so early revealed, there are two grand subjects which occupy a prominent place:—**God** and **MAN**. In their relations and dependencies, these constitute the most interesting topics within the circle of moral science. There is one thought in relation to them which it has been the *desire* of the writer to keep in view throughout the whole; and that is, **THAT BY ALL THE EXHIBITIONS OF DIVINE TRUTH, MAN IS HUMBLED AND GOD IS EXALTED.**

In all the preceding discussions, we have found

no truth that does not give man a low place. Much indeed has God done for man ; but at every step of our progress, the reflection must have forced itself upon us, "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him ?"

Man's very existence is a borrowed and created existence, and could not be continued an hour without the sustaining hand of God. His dependence is so absolute and constant, that should God's sustaining agency be withdrawn, he would instantly drop into annihilation. He acts not, lives not without the divine concurrence and visitation. What men shall be, and what they shall do ; with what powers they shall be invested; what opportunities they shall enjoy, and what condition they shall occupy ; what views they shall form, and what plans they shall carry into effect ; what motives of action shall be set before them, and what influence they shall have upon their affections and conduct ; in what pursuit they shall engage, and what character they shall possess : is so absolutely under a governing providence, that no man can predict his character, condition, or destiny, or foretell what awaits him the next moment, or what will be his next thought. They are not even their own property, but belonging absolutely and unalienably to another, and accountable to him universally and forever.

The race is also a depraved and corrupt race. Every principle of revealed religion considers the human family in a state of utter ruin. From the first moment of their existence as men, the youngest and the oldest, the lowest and the highest, every individual without exception, is represented in the Bible as having violated the law of God, and disregarded his rights as Creator and Governor, and his obligations as creatures and subjects. The Bible affects no concealment of the moral turpitude of men, but speaks of it in terms humbling and reproachful, condemns it as "abominable and filthy," and represents it so odious and detestable as to deserve the wrath and curse of God both in this life and in that which is to come. So imbedded is the human heart in wickedness, that left to its own uninterrupted tendencies, its infallible and necessary consequence is all the plagues of the second death.

When from degradation like this we survey the method by which creatures so sinful and condemned, are rescued from guilt and condemnation, there are even here the strongest marks of human vileness. The Scriptures reveal the purpose of God to save, but it is by the humbling method of *a pure forgiveness*. This method of mercy does not even excuse or mitigate their rebellion; does not invest them with any personal claims on the divine favor, nor consider that any

injustice would be done them, if God should curse them forever. Their personal *ill-desert* is never obliterated, either in this world, or the world to come. The very grace that redeems them sets before them the turpitude of their iniquity, condemns all their self-justifying excuses, sweeps away all their refuges of lies, prostrates them in the dust, and there presents them with a free and full forgiveness, for which they give no equivalent, and which is mere mercy from first to last. Such a salvation,—while it is a blessed, is a most reproachful salvation to sinners, because, though it saves to the uttermost, it fixes on the saved the stigma of a well-earned perdition. Men do not naturally fall in with such a salvation; and the reason why it is so often rejected, is that the despisers of mercy cannot consent to abase themselves so low, as such a method of salvation abases them.

The truths we have contemplated also *make it necessary that all who are pardoned, should themselves possess an humble spirit.* They not only view men as lost and condemned, but make it indispensable to their salvation, that they should see and ingenuously confess their pollution and guilt. Among the revealed conditions of pardoning mercy is the spirit which prostrates them as low in their own estimation as they are in the view of God and his holy law; nor are they ever in a state of mind to welcome this salvation without the spirit of ingen-

uous self-loathing and self-abhorrence. No man can see his need of mercy, until he sees he is condemned by justice; no man can feel his need of mercy, until he feels he is condemned by justice; no man can accept of mercy, until he cordially approves of justice. This is the self-abasement to which the Bible sinks them, and to which they sink themselves.

To augment their humiliation, the whole scope of the Scriptures instructs us, that *God extends his mercy toward them only for the sake of another.* Such is the united testimony of Moses and the prophets, of Christ and the apostles. The sole ground of pardon and acceptance, is the atoning blood and justifying righteousness of Jesus Christ. If we inquire through whom, or for whose sake, or on whose account, the righteous Lawgiver justifies; to this inquiry, the divine Oracle gives but one answer. It is not from respect to anything done by men themselves, but entirely from respect to the character and work of Jesus Christ. Here, then, the truth of God again casts apostate man into the depths of humiliation. What can be more mortifying to his pride, than to be made the recipient of the divine favor as the gift of mere mercy; and that, too, in a way which not only recognizes his utter ill-desert, but so far from making any account of his virtues and goodness as the ground of his acceptance, has an exclusive

regard to the interposition of another? "The lofty looks of man are thus humbled, and the haughtiness of man bowed down." Thus low does the truth of God humble proud man. He is humbled in his loftiest exaltation, and exalted only in his deepest humility. O what contempt is poured upon all the glory of man by the truths of the Bible "that no flesh may glory in God's presence!"

Yet is there a delightful counterpart to this truth. In humbling man, we exalt God. We have desired to give God his proper place, and not only to represent him as the greatest and best, and most exalted being in the universe, but to bring out to the view of men his existence, government, and glories. We have represented him as the great First Cause and Last End of all things; from everlasting inhabiting his own high and holy place,—the sole proprietor of that immeasurable continent, that shoreless ocean,—the exclusive inhabitant of a duration without beginning and without end, and the exalted being who possesses in his own existence a mysterious, mighty, inconceivable Eternity. We see him clothed with every attribute both of natural perfection and moral excellence; elevated above all the grossness of matter, and concentrating all the intellect, volition, and activity of a pure, perfect and infinite Spirit. We see his will invested with om-

nipotence, and his every volition clothed with an agency beyond the reach of resistance, obstruction, or control. We see this uncreated Spirit everywhere present in the essence of his nature, the extent of his knowledge, and the ubiquity of his influence. We see him glorious in holiness; and how the unchanging impulse of his infinite mind is to love that which is right, and accomplish that which is best. We see how holy, how awful, how amiable and how glorious is his justice, and how its severest illustrations secure and perpetuate the safety and welfare of his universal kingdom. We see how munificent, how tender, how unutterably condescending is his mercy, and what ineffable loveliness is discovered in this highest expression of his benevolent nature. And in all this, we see "no variableness, nor shadow of turning;" while everything else is subjected to mutation and decay, their very mutability do but illustrate and magnify his own divine immutability and faithfulness.

We have taken a glance at his wisdom, power and love in the creation and government of the universe; spreading out the heavens as a curtain, and the earth as a tent to dwell in; filling the earth, the air, and the waters with their appropriate inhabitants, and diffusing his wondrous glory over the immense fabric of created existence. We have read his law—his righteous and authori-

tative law—precepts that are pure, prohibitions that are reasonable, penalties and sanctions that his own character and the character of his subjects required him to prescribe; and how he has established a government in the consciences of his accountable creatures, which, while it enjoins on them subjection, gives a moral dignity to him in which every holy mind rejoices. We have also beheld him at the head of a most efficient administration, and maintaining a supremacy, a sovereignty, which leads him to “do according to his will in the armies of heaven and amid the inhabitants of the earth,” and which imparts the splendors of uncreated royalty to his throne. In this administration, we have seen him disclosing the operations both of an universal and particular providence, himself deciding the visible superiority and inferiority of all his creatures, both as it respects their condition, their intelligence, their moral character, and their final destination; and thus magnifying his own great and adorable supremacy in his “most holy, wise, and powerful governing all his creatures and all their actions.” We have seen how his almighty and invisible agency sustains all worlds; and how the life and breath which animate the living population of the universe, are the hourly infusion of his all-pervading presence; and how he lives in everything that lives. We have seen him observing with a minute

inspection all that exists and is done, inflicting all that is suffered, and communicating all that is enjoyed, owning all that is scattered over his vast dominions, and as deeply interested in all as though his first and best designs, his first and highest desires were linked in with the work of his hands. It is a glorious feature in the system of revealed truth, that it excludes God from nothing; that it recognizes no partial atheism, obscures no impress of the divine hand, conceals no vestige of his foot-steps, and discovers him first, him last, him midst, him always.

And when we come to the wonderful method of his grace, how is God *All in all!* Do you ask who devised it; it was God. That mysterious expedient whereby God can be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; that mighty effort of mercy and righteousness, wisdom and power, by which all the apparently jarring attributes of the divine nature harmonize and illustrate each other in the redemption of sinners,—an expedient which put to naught all the wisdom of this world, and mocked all the powers of the angelic and human creation—was all his “own purpose and grace,” and one all the honors of which are ascribed alone to him. All the departments of this great redemption are filled up by God; he is not only the Author, but the Finisher of the whole. When man had fallen and

justice was about to inflict her heaviest blow, it was he who made the earliest disclosures of this salvation to our apostate progenitors, and all along through the ancient economy, lighted up the darkness of the typical dispensation, by faith and hope in the great Mediator. And when the way was prepared by a general expectation throughout the world of the advent of some illustrious deliverer—by the fulfilment of the predictions in the Jewish Scriptures concerning the promised Messiah—by the cessation of that long line of prophets and inspired men who had been raised up to preserve the knowledge of the one Only Living and True God, and the prevalence of a ceremonial religion that had set at naught the obligation of the moral law—by the degradation of morals throughout the Pagan world, and the progress of human philosophy and intellectual refinement, which had then made their highest and best, but unavailing efforts for the redemption of mankind;—in this fulness of time, God sent forth his Son as the light and salvation of the world. We contemplate his birth, his life, his death, his resurrection and ascension, all completed in a series of astonishing and miraculous events, and all calculated to substantiate the divinity of his person, the fact of his messiahship, and the glory of his all-sufficient propitiation for the sins of men. And then see the God of heaven coming down from

his holy habitation and dwelling among men, to give efficiency to his grace, and by his own Eternal Spirit, in order to prepare a people for his praise.

"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory for thy mercy and truth's sake." To the accomplishment of this redemption everything in time is subjected and rendered subservient. We hold a place in that world which God has made the theatre of his most wonderful operations, and the history of which has been opening scenes that are constantly new and constantly exhibiting the mighty hand and astonishing wonders of redeeming mercy. We occupy an eminence from which we behold mighty revolutions in the moral universe, all reflecting the wonders of infinite wisdom, and all concentrating in the great redemption. And when from the eminence on which the truth of God has placed us, we look down the descent of future ages, we see that the revolutions that are now taking place, and that will take place hereafter,—the enterprises that are now matured and that will be matured hereafter,—the nations that now exist and that will be brought into existence hereafter,—the purification of the true church and the conversion or destruction of that which is impure and apostate,—the restoration of the Jews and the conversion of the Gentiles,—the downfall

of the man of sin and the confusion of the false prophet, all proving the powerful auxiliaries, and themselves constitute some of the glorious results of Christ's redemption. So obviously do they all lead to high and awful discoveries of the Godhead that when they shall break upon the world, men shall "enter into the rock and hide them in the dust for fear of the Lord and for the glory of his majesty." All the glories of the divine nature are brought out from their retirement and obtruded upon the admiration of men in this method of his grace. There was no other way in which God could unfold all the perfections of his infinite mind; no other in which he could so clearly and fully manifest any of his perfections; no other in which he could so fully prepare the minds of all moral beings to contemplate them with an arrested attention and keen sensibility. Here they shine in full-orbed splendor. Here, they overpower the intelligence of seraphs. They dazzle the senses of the highest orders of being, and they "cover their faces," while in prostrate admiration, they say one to another, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory;" thus exalting him as God over all, and proclaiming his exaltation forever and ever.

To all that God has purposed and performed in the present world, there is an end. What that mighty result is, so worthy of God, has been dis-

closed. It is in the final issues of the whole, that we behold him more than ever exalted. Men terminate their sublunary existence in the grave. Not until the morning of the resurrection will this whole creation and all the designs of God respecting it, reach their final issues. The voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall sound to announce the final advent of the Son of Man, to convoke the universe before the bar of judgment, to proclaim the long-predicted and fearful trial of moral character, to summon angels, men, and devils to God's all-decisive sentence and their unalterable doom. And O, how "*the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down!*" *How will the God of heaven be exalted* in that day when the universe shall stand before him to acknowledge him as their Lord and king; when he shall assert his supremacy and vindicate the rectitude of everything he has done; when every mouth shall be stopped and the whole world shall become guilty before him; when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father; when the mediatorial kingdom shall be closed, and the Son deliver it up, and God shall be all in all; and when the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment and the righteous into life eternal! There will indeed then be drawn a dividing line both in the character

and condition of the universe through interminable ages; but they shall all unite in *exalting God* —the one cheerfully and of choice, the other reluctantly and by constraint—the one in heaven, the other in hell—the one by suffering, the other by praise—the one by disclosing the glories of his punitive righteousness, the other by disclosing and extolling the glories of his redeeming and wonderful mercy. Where now are they who once defamed and blasphemed the God of heaven? Where are rebel angels that so early threw off their allegiance and defied his authority? Where are “those his enemies” in every age of the world, who “would not that he should reign over them?” And where are the unfallen and redeemed creation? Where is the blood-bought church redeemed out of every kindred and nation and tongue under heaven? Low, low prostrated before his throne, in everlasting but sweet humility and self-abasement, and saying day and night, “Blessing, and honor, and dominion, and power be unto him that sitteth thereon, and to the Lamb forever!” Yes, there is exaltation for no other being in the universe then but God. God is exalted; God “*alone*” is exalted in that day.

It is a delightful thought that God is above all our praise. We can do little more than behold his glory; and as we behold it, veil our faces and

lie in humble prostration at his feet. “Who by searching can find out God?”

“Stand, and adore ; how glorious he !  
That dwells in bright eternity.  
We gaze, and we confound our sight,  
Plunged in th' abyss of dazzling light.

Great God, forgive our feeble praise,  
Sound out thine own eternal praise ;  
A song so vast, a theme so high,  
Calls for the voice that tuned the sky.”

There are those who are happy in the confidence, that God will be infinitely and forever exalted. Sweet assurance, that “the Lord God omnipotent reigneth;” that his eye and his heart who wrought the first things are fixed on the best end ; that he never has lost sight of it, either in the works of creation, providence, or redemption ; that all things are tending to his exaltation as their centre and final issue ; that he has all means, instruments and causes in his hand, and that he will prosecute and consummate his purpose with all the ardor and zeal which infinite greatness and goodness can employ in the completion of the greatest and best design. We may indeed rejoice ; yea, we may shout for joy. Heaven will be full of God. There the infinite One shall have his own proper place, and the honors of the universe shall be paid to him. There every crea-

ture shall have his proper place also, and lie at the footstool of his Sovereign and Redeemer; and because it is a world of everlasting humility, it will be supremely happy.







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